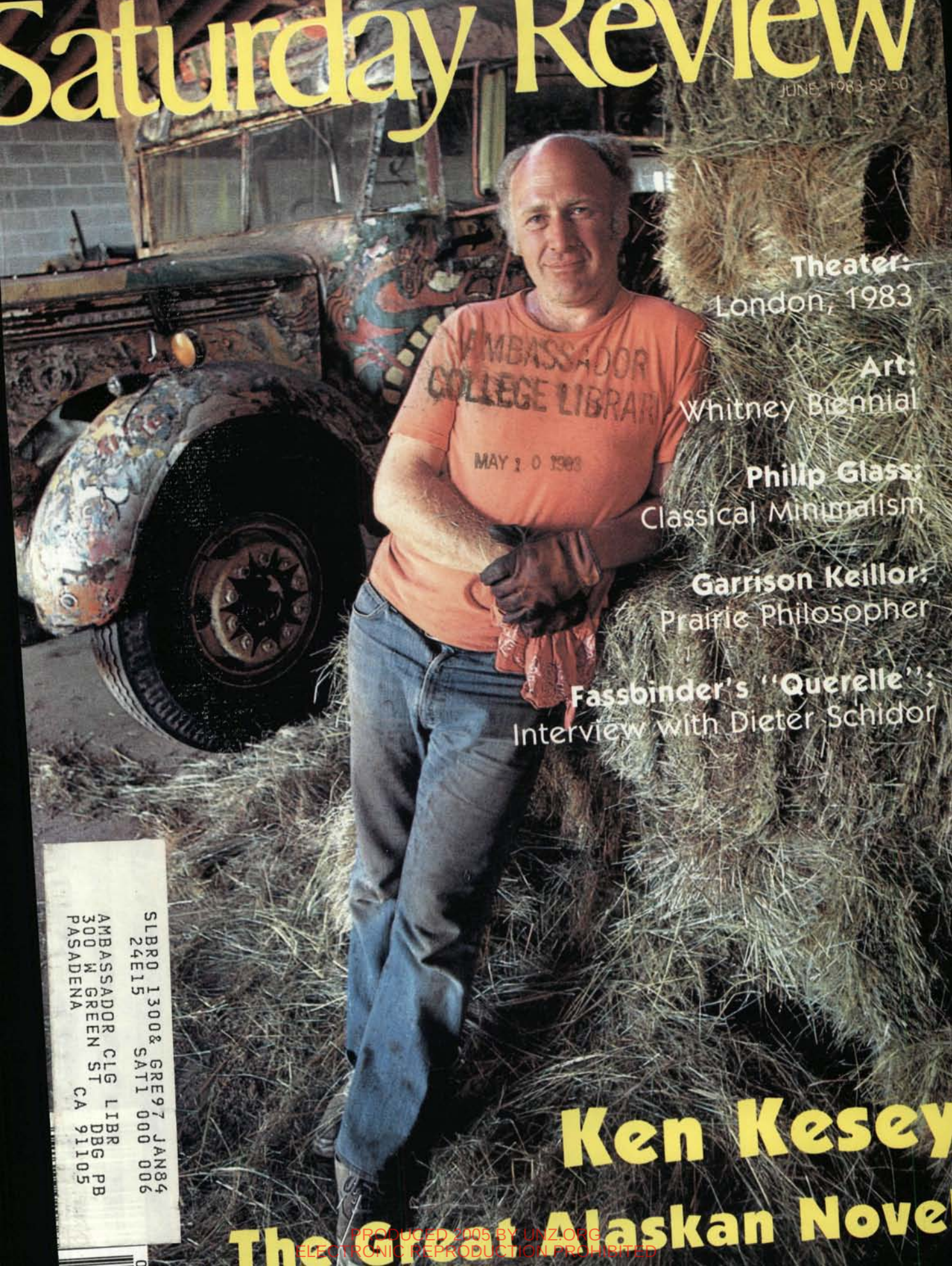
Saturday Review

JUNE 1983 $2.50



Theater: London, 1983

Art: Whitney Biennial

Philip Glass: Classical Minimalism

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Fassbinder's "Querelle": Interview with Dieter Schidor

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HERE'S TO THOSE WHO CAN MAKE HISTORY OUT OF THE SAME 12 NOTES.

Until his late twenties, Philip Glass was a typical bright young composer. Foundations showered grants on him for writing music in a conventional, somewhat imitative style.

Then, Glass found his own style. Its roots lay in eastern as well as western music, and it was fresh, original and unexpected. In music circles, it was unacceptable. All the grants stopped.

But that didn't stop Glass. He found other ways to fund his work. One was driving a taxi.

Today, the music establishment has changed its tune. Philip Glass is considered one of the foremost serious composers in America, with an audience so large and so diverse it even includes rock fans.

Success hasn't made Glass any less of a maverick. But for all the traditions he breaks, there's one he respects. At the end of the day, he enjoys a Cutty Sark.

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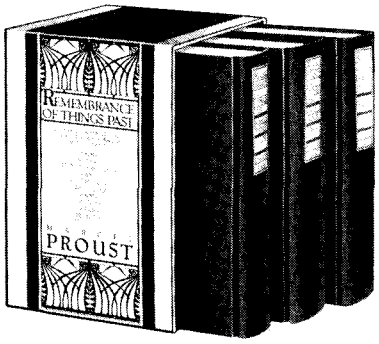

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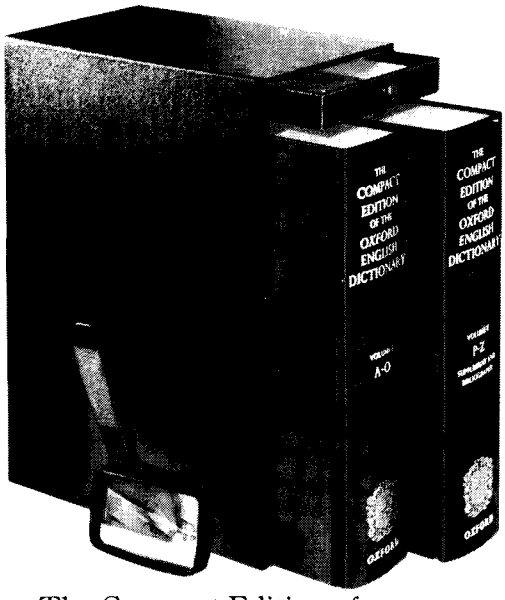

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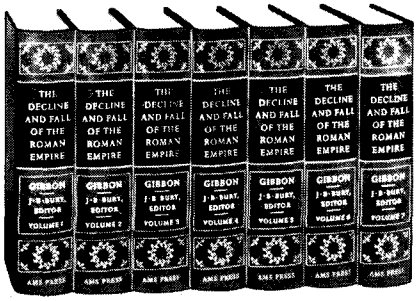

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LETTERS

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I should just like to express my delight that *Saturday Review* is back! It matters little where headquarters happen to be.

Let us read the words, and become acquainted with the thoughts, of writers and artists of *vision*. I want to know more about the literary life in other cultures, about what fine American works I missed because the press overlooked them. I'd like to know more about Mitteraud's "cultural convention" —the ideas and insights exchanged. *SR's* Borges and Price interviews were interesting. Keep it up! Keep Norman Cousins writing too. He has vision.

Wellington McKenzie III
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Congratulations on not letting the *Review* pass into history. There have been so many demises of good literary journals that it is heartwarming to see someone trying to revive one. We don't care if you publish the *Review* from the moon, as long as there are a few oases available in the publishing wilderness.

Mrs. Rowshan Daneshy
Duncan, Oklahoma

Glad to have you back!

I especially enjoyed the article on El Greco, great on background, both Greek and Italian. This is the best of a number of articles about him and the exhibit that have appeared in the last months.

I also found the Luis Borges interview wonderful: his studying of old English and old Norse at his age is truly remarkable, his feeling about ethics refreshing.

Elsie E. Wendt
Gary, Indiana

Only recently I was telling some friends how much I missed *Saturday Review*. And so, it was a most pleasant surprise to receive a copy of it in the mail this week. You've done a splendid job in this first "renewed" issue. Only one very small complaint: restore the Travel section. Yours was always literate and informative.

Joseph Peters
Coyle, Oklahoma

We are glad to see *Saturday Review* rising Phoenix-like from the ashes. Thanks!

And we hope some of the deeper and thought-provoking literature will be covered—not just the currently trendy offerings. There must be some new Emersons about.

I do not remember who said, "Culture is a people's pursuit of its total perfection. . . ," but I would like to see us prove it.

Gordon B. Carson
Midland, Michigan

You asked for reactions to the rebirth of *Saturday Review*, and I am reacting so favorably that I had to write to tell you so.

The March issue was great—vital and digestible. Thank you for the efforts which must have gone into the continuance of a truly great publication!

Joyce Haman
Irvine, California

It was a delightful surprise to receive the first issue of the new *Saturday Review*. The format offers everything we have appreciated in the past: coverage of all the arts, fresh and lively writing, attractive design, knowledgeable columnists, and concise articles (a helpful concession to professional people who never have sufficient time for leisure reading). The features were well-chosen, to represent a cross-section of the modern and the classical. Particularly appealing were your efforts to encourage reader involvement. This has created a sense of dialogue and vitality.

Saturday Review has not merely been resurrected; it is alive. We send our congratulations and our encouragement.

Christopher and Louis Wilson
Willowdale, Ontario, Canada

In our last issue we inadvertently omitted a credit line from the Richard Price interview. The American Audio Prose Library is funded by the Missouri Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and KOPN radio.

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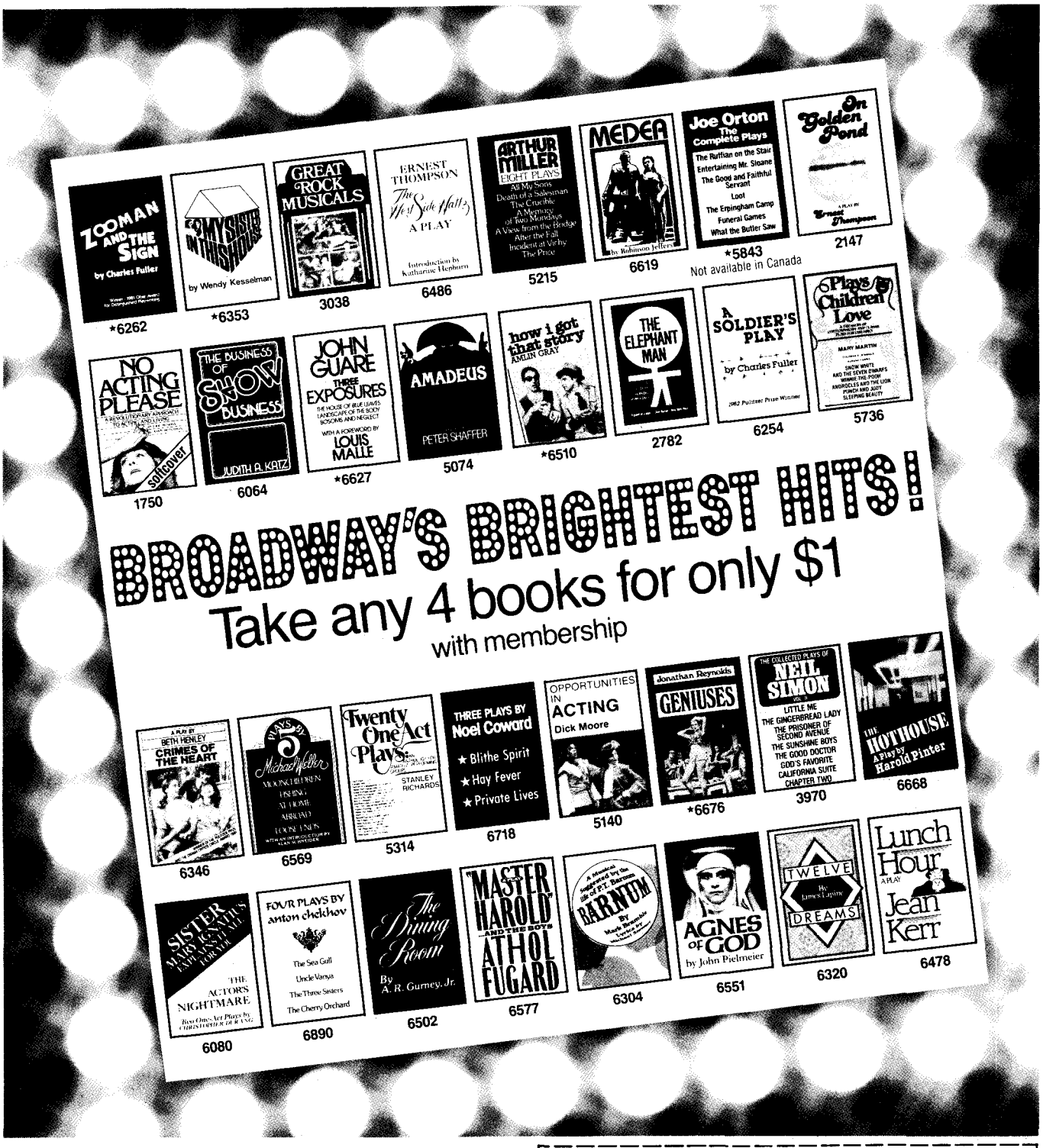

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The End of Allusion

There once was a time, in the history of this society, when conversation and communication were illuminated with literary and historical allusions, and the ability of people to convey meaning was enriched by their knowledge of and access to the work of creative minds from across the centuries. No more. Conversation and letters today, like education, have become enfeebled by emphasis on the functional and the purely contemporary. The result is a mechanization not just of the way we live but of the way we think, and of the human spirit itself.

The United States Constitution has been described as the most remarkable and enduring political document ever devised by the human mind. The Constitution is not a sheaf of political instructions and strictures but a harvesting of intellectual and cultural riches going back to antiquity. The discussions and debates that went into the making of that document were not confined to operational problems but drew heavily upon the experience and wisdom of the ages. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention were able to undergird their arguments with allusions to historical situations and to the ideas of philosophers, essayists, and dramatists. Names such as Thucydides, Aristotle, Herodotus, Plutarch, or Seneca were commonly cited to support their positions. They alluded to fictional characters from Aristophanes, Marlowe, or Shakespeare to lend color to the exploration of ideas. The analytical essays by Hamilton, Madison, and Jay that appeared in *The Federalist Papers* were an excursion into the remote corners of history.

Men such as Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, and Rush regarded literate conversation as among life's most gratifying exercises. They could summon pertinent quotations from Suetonius or Machiavelli or Montaigne to illustrate a principle. If they referred to Bacon's opinion of Aristotle, they didn't have to cite particulars; they assumed such details were common knowledge. Their allusions were not the product of intellectual ostentation or ornamentation but the natural condiments of discourse, bringing out the full flavor of the cultivated intelligence.

The same was true of correspondence. People regarded letters as an art form and a highly satisfying way of engaging in civilized exchange. The correspondence of Jefferson and Adams and Priestley was not so much a display of personal matters as a review of the human condition. It was not unusual for the writers to range across the entire arena of human thought as a way of sharing perceptions. Allusion was common currency.

Today, one's mailbox has become the happy hunting ground of pitchmen, bill collectors, and professional charity solicitors. The daily mail is not an invitation to a feast of ideas or a way of maintaining contact with family and friends; it is an encounter with marginalia. The outgoing mail is hardly less depersonalized. One argues with the gas company about erratic meters or duplicate bills, or declines invitations to money-raising functions, or signs or returns petitions against proliferating highways or against reductions in the police force. Rarely do we turn to letters as a way of ventilating the inner life of the mind or of embarking on voyages of intellectual discovery.

In the past five years, I have had frequent opportunities to visit university campuses. Nothing is easier than to get into discussions about job markets or comparative salaries; nothing is more difficult to discuss than the purposes of education or human potentiality. We are turning out young men and women who are superbly trained but poorly educated. They are a how-to generation, less concerned with the nature of things than with the working of things. They are beautifully skilled but intellectually underdeveloped. They know everything that is to be known about the functional requirements of their trade but very little about the human situation that serves as the context for their work. They have been separated from tradition and from the creative splendor accumulated over the years by gifted minds. They live without allusion.

We are turning out young men and women who are superbly trained but poorly educated.

Does it make any difference in the final scheme of things whether the human race lacks knowledge of its past, and goes unnourished by its poetry, art, and radiant musings? What troubles me most of all about the question is that I wouldn't know where to begin if I wanted to stage a debate.

—N.C.

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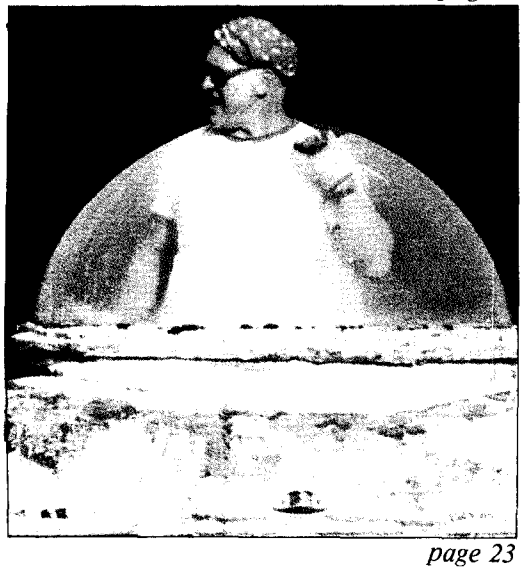
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SPOTLIGHTS

"Quilters"

In 1981, young actress Molly Newman chose to read from *The Quilters: Women and Domestic Art,* a collection of oral histories of pioneer women, at her audition for the Denver Center Theatre Company. A year later she had co-authored a play, *Quilters,* and produced it for the Center's experimental "Lab" theater. The small audience that came at midnight to see the unusual production and who stayed until 3 a.m. to offer their suggestions were not satisfied that it remain obscure. It hasn't. In December of 1982 *Quilters* opened on the main stage at the Denver Center, where it became the highest-grossing play in the Center's history. It was also produced in Pittsburgh this spring and will tour the Rocky Mountain area throughout the month of May.

To create *Quilters,* Newman collaborated with Barbara Damashek, a composer, musical director, and stage director. The "quilt" became the working metaphor for the play. The women's oral histories were dramatized and organized into "blocks," designated by the names of celebrated quilting patterns. The blocks were joined together by Damashek's music, composed for such instruments as the fiddle, freaka (a type of whistle), train whistle, wood block, autoharp, beribeau, banjo, and guitar. As the story revolves around one woman, Sarah, it depicts the lives of all the pioneer women who helped shape today's West. Sarah's life is a legacy to her daughters that she passes on to them through her stories and the "legacy quilt," which they complete by the end of the production.

Quilters will reopen at the Denver Center on May 31. □

An Exhibition of Dogs?

Why is "man's best friend" suddenly turning up in great numbers in the work of contemporary artists? *Dogs!,* an exhibit organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, will look at the use of dog imagery in sixty recent works of art by fifteen artists. Although several well-known artists, such as William Wegman, Roy de Forest, and Donald Roller Wilson, have been working with dog imagery for a number of years, new interpretations have recently emerged. The canine as a symbol of fear and violence or as a ritualistic totem appears in the work of such artists as Carlos Almaraz, Jeffrey Vallance, Sam Pappas, and Genna Watson. Other artists are more playful. J.P. Hutto photographs dogs dressed as men; architect Stanley Tigerman based his design for the Chicago SPCA on a hound dog; and William Wegman dresses up his Weimaraner, Man Ray, as a dinosaur. The exhibit will run from June 3 to July 29 in Chicago and begin a two-year national tour this fall. □

Women's Theater

In the traditional theater repertory, an estimated four roles exist for men to every one for women. Many of the roles that do exist for women depict them as passive spectators rather than active participants in life. In response to this, over 600 women's theater groups have emerged in the last decade. Their members strive to create a more accurate portrayal of women's lives than that presented in commercial theater.

From May 16 to 22 in Santa Cruz, California, artists from across the country will converge for the first national conference of women in theater. The festival will include major theatrical performances, experimental work, workshops, classes, lectures, and special-interest performances that depict various ethnic groups, senior citizens, and the physically handicapped. The Festival's goal is to present truthful images of women's lives as seen through the works of American women in theater. □

Images of a Changing World

Yanagibashi (1910) by Ishii Hakutei is one of 135 prints on exhibit in *Images of a Changing World: Japanese Prints of the Twentieth Century* at the Saint Louis Art Museum. Organized by the Portland Art Museum, the exhibition examines within a single context both the traditional and modern schools of Japanese printmaking, with greatest attention to the period from 1910 to 1939, when Japanese print artists were still working actively toward a successful synthesis of Japanese traditions and modern European influences. The exhibition will travel on to Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Portland through January 1984. □

Opera Premieres

An unusual breadth characterizes Leonard Bernstein's composing. Two of his most popular compositions are musicals, *On the Town* and *West Side Story.* His famous *Chichester Psalms* and *Mass* have been called "theater pieces for singers, players, and dancers." He has also composed a ballet, *Fancy Free,* symphonies, and operas. This summer Bernstein's latest opera, *A Quiet Place,* will have its world premiere at the Houston Grand Opera, as the result of the first trans-Atlantic triple commission in history. The other co-commissioners and producers are the Kennedy Center, where the opera will run for two weeks in October, and La Scala, where it will receive its European premiere in June 1984. The new opera is directed by Peter Shifter, with libretto by Stephen Wadsworth. The cast will include soprano Sheri Greenawald and baritone Timothy Nolan. *A Quiet Place* will run in Houston from June 18 to 26.

Another world opera premiere this spring is by the little-known composer Margaret Garwood. Her opera *Rappaccini's Daughter* is based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story by the same name. Garwood has transformed Hawthorne's chilling tale into an opera of haunting sensuality. When presented at The Pennsylvania Opera Theater in 1980 as a work-in-progress, *Rappaccini's Daughter* received critical acclaim. This year it will be performed under the direction of Maggie L. Harrer and conducted by the Opera Theater's artistic director, Barbara Silverstein, with the title roles sung by Jean Bradel and Michael Ballam. The work will run from May 6 to 15. □

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Willa Cather

Her work still widely read and internationally reprinted, Willa Cather (1873-1947) has moved from her original status as a regional writer to acceptance into the canon of respected American authors. She wrote about those people and institutions that embodied values she respected: the southwest Indians, the first French settlements in Quebec, the ancient Catholic Church. Her best works are set in Nebraska—*O Pioneers!, My Antonia, The Song of the Lark,* and *One of Ours*—and document the trials and virtues of Norwegian, Bohemian, French, and Spanish immigrants who homesteaded Nebraska and built the railroad to Denver. Cather went to college in Nebraska, became a journalist and English teacher in Pittsburgh, and went on to be managing editor of *McClure's* magazine in New York. She lived most of the rest of her life there, remembering her fifteen years in Nebraska from a comfortable and nostalgic distance.

In three half-hour segments, National Public Radio presents a dramatic portrait of the life, times, and legacy of this American author. Based on a memoir by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, the series features reminiscences of fellow artists and friends, including authors Truman Capote, Eudora Welty, and Doris Grumbach, violinist Yehudi Menuhin, literary critic Alfred Kazin, and historian Mildred Bennett. *Willa Cather: A Look of Remembrance* will air on May 6, 13, and 20. □

***Daughters of Revolution* by Grant Wood.**

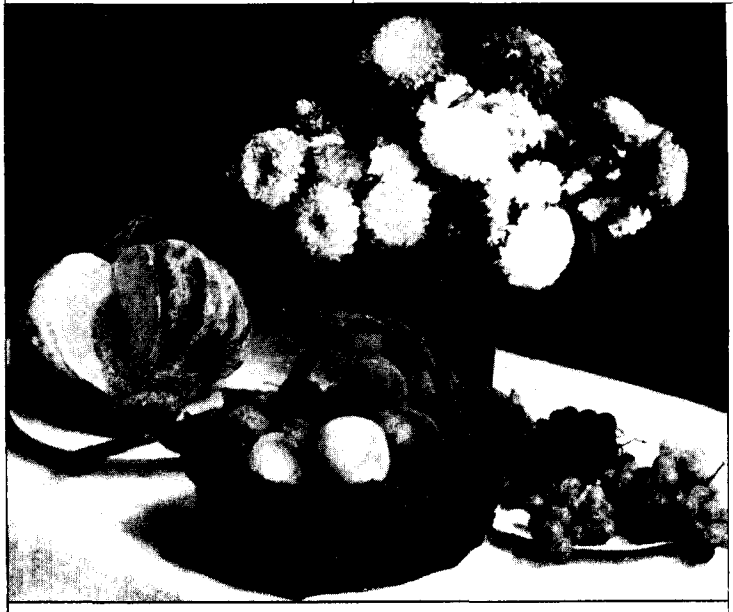
Grant Wood Exhibition

Grant Wood's famous painting *American Gothic* ranks among the most recognized in American art, while many of his other works have languished. Similarly, the concept of Regionalism that Wood vigorously espoused has aroused little public interest until recently. Wood painted pictures that portray and glorify the Midwestern farm heritage and the hardy pioneers that tamed the prairielands. His vision of the beauty of the fertile Midwest and the integrity of the people was drawn from his own fond childhood memories of Iowa farm life and from his passionate interest in nineteenth-century Midwestern art, architecture, history, furniture design, decorative arts, and photography. He and two other Regionalist painters, Thomas Hart Benton and John Steuart Curry, sought to foster national pride in the homeland and to spur public interest in and support of regional art and artists. Wood's Regionalism was a revolt against homogenization and the blurring of regional differences.

The largest Grant Wood retrospective ever assembled will open at the Whitney Museum of American Art on June 16. Organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the exhibition consists of approximately ninety paintings, drawings, and lithographs that span Wood's career and which include many works from private collections that have never been shown publicly. The exhibition will close in New York in September and travel on to Minneapolis, Chicago, and San Francisco. □

Treasures from Shanghai

At the request of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the prestigious Shanghai Museum began in 1980 to organize objects for a special exhibition of Chinese art. *Treasures from the Shanghai Museum: 6,000 Years of Chinese Art* covers the entire span of Chinese art history, from prehistoric to modern times, through artifacts, bronze vessels, pottery and porcelains, paintings, and applied arts. All pieces were selected from the Shanghai Museum, and none has been seen in the U.S. before. The exhibit runs in San Francisco from May 4 through September and will travel to Chicago, Houston, and Washington, D.C. □



***China Asters and Fruit* by Henri Fantin-Latour.**

Fantin-Latour Retrospective

Colorful floral paintings and still lifes are the images most closely associated with the French painter Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904). In France his reputation was first secured by the popularity of his portraits; the floral studies were virtually unknown there until they caused a sensation in a 1906 Paris retrospective two years after the painter's death. The works that Fantin-Latour considered to be his most significant expressions were the imaginative fantasies, allegorical pieces mostly inspired by the music of Wagner, Schumann, Berlioz, and Brahms. These he painted in a style totally distinct from the colorful floral images or the muted portrait studies. Fantin-Latour's goals in his floral studies were to render the subject faithfully and to compose the painting in a harmonious manner, with great attention to pictorial balance and chromatic relationships. His ongoing experimentation with color parallels that of his contemporaries, the Impressionists, but Fantin-Latour never abandoned a faithful rendering of the construction and color of a flower in favor of optical effects.

More than 150 important works on loan from museums and collections throughout North America and Europe provide an in-depth review of the artist's oeuvre in the retrospective *Fantin-Latour,* on view at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco from June 18 to September 5, the exhibition's only U.S. showing. The exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Canada in conjunction with the Louvre and The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. □

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A Classical Distinction

Philip Glass, the enigmatic Minimalist composer, has been dismissed by many classical music purists for his use of electric instruments, but has cultivated a wide audience of those who find his music accessible.

BY LINDA SANDERS

For most classical composers, getting people to stand in line to hear a new piece is as elusive a goal as getting rich for writing it. But people *do* stand in line to hear a new Philip Glass piece, and if his compositions have not yet put him in the lap of luxury, at least they're no longer putting him behind the wheel of a cab.

During the past fifteen years, Glass has moved from iconoclastic obscurity to cult status, to something approaching popularity even by the outsized standards of commercial music. By contemporary classical standards, he is a phenomenon. Classified as a "crossover" in the recording field, Glass has been under contract to CBS Records since 1981, and his first album, *Glassworks*, has sold about 100,000 copies worldwide. In March CBS released his new album, *The Photographer,* comprising the score of a music-theater piece that premiered in Europe last year. (Glass' concert group, The Philip Glass Ensemble, is playing music from *The Photographer* on its thirteen-city U.S. tour in April, and at Carnegie Hall May 10. Next fall a new, staged production of the work will be mounted at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.) In the future CBS plans to release some of Glass' older recordings, several of which have long been unavailable.

Glass' choice of instrumentation has been a significant factor in his popularity. Some of his works use standard orchestral instruments; others do not. Though he has been dismissed by many classical music purists for his use of electric keyboards and amplifiers, he has cultivated a new audience who find this classical music accessible. But it is his musical *idiom* that has won him both loyal admirers and bitter detractors. Glass emerged in the late Sixties as one of several avant-garde composers who eschewed the academic serialist mainstream in favor of a style that was eventually dubbed Minimalism. These composers worked within a tonal framework in which harmony and melody were deliberately limited, were invigorated by a lively pulse and rhythmic subtleties, and were colored by the visceral impact of amplified instruments or by appealing timbral effects. The structural basis of this music was repetition—small collections of notes that might change minutely over long periods, or shift abruptly. Each of the best-known composers associated with Minimalist repetitive structures —Glass, Steve Reich, and Terry Riley—had a

Glass incorporates the extremes of rock and opera.

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different approach. But rivalries ensued, chiefly between Glass and Reich, in part because their style was so unusual that critics and audiences often paid little attention to how the composers differed from one another.

Virtually all of Glass' recent work has been in mixed media. As a founding member of the avant-garde theater group Mabou Mines, he has provided music for numerous productions. In the field of dance, he collaborated with dancer-choreographer Lucinda Childs on *Dance* (1979), and will be working with Twyla Tharp next season on a new work to be presented at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Glass has also worked in film, notably *North Star* (1977) and more recently *Koyaanisqatsi,* a film composed exclusively of visual images and music. But perhaps his most important contribution has been in opera, contemporary music's bleakest landscape.

Of the very few new operas of real magnitude in the past decade, two are by Glass: *Einstein on the Beach* (a 1976 collaboration with director Robert Wilson) and *Satyagraha* (1981), non-narrative profiles of Albert Einstein and Mohandas Gandhi. His next opera, *Akhnaten,* the last in what he now regards as a trilogy, will premiere next fall in Europe, then at the Houston Grand Opera.

Glass' work comprehends a number of polarities in addition to his merger of classical and popular music. He incorporates the extremes of rock and opera, the vernacular and the cultured, the West and the East to create music that can be hauntingly beautiful or maddeningly commonplace—sometimes both at once. Writers have praised Glass' music for being brash and street-smart; *SR's* record critic Gregory Sandow called it "sacred music." This combination of the worldly and the ineffable is hardly new: it is the very essence of art music. But in Glass' work, the actual or implicit reference to the vernacular often makes music that is as disarmingly casual as Glass himself.

The neutral decor of Philip Glass' modest New York apartment will not tempt *Vogue* this year. On entering, I am greeted first by Glass, then by three rowdy cats. To the right is a table heaped with cassettes, to the left a spinet piano that suggests impromptu sessions of "Heart and Soul," rather than twentieth-century masterpieces. Beyond it are a color TV and VCR with Bruce Lee movie cassettes that might or might not belong to his children.

Seated, Glass squirms in his chair but frequently lands in the attitude of his best-known publicity photo: hands clasping crossed knees. He still dresses as if he were about to jump behind the wheel of a cab, but his is a face that says "artist," one that Cutty Sark paid five figures to use in its current ad campaign. His speech is soft and rapid, sometimes gathering momentum until it comes to an abrupt halt. I suspect this is not the only quality Glass shares with his music, the busy, amiable surface of which is often deceptively simple.

As he talks, the conversation is punctuated by a series of crashes from a room down the hall where the cats have retreated. Unruffled, Glass continues describing the early years of Minimalism:

"I was living in Paris [studying with Nadia Boulanger after the University of Chicago and Juilliard], and Steve [Reich] was living in California working with Terry [Riley]. We all came back to New York about the same time, about 1967-68, pretty much with our ideas intact, amazingly intact for that age. In those early years we depended on each other to an extent—for one thing, we were the only people who listened to and played each others' music. But the real dialogue between Steve and me was over by 1970.

"It wouldn't have seemed like such a feud between Steve and me, except that it took ten years for other people to emerge, and the music itself was not considered accessible for a long time. The first piece that had a really big public was *Einstein on the Beach* in 1976—and that's a piece that will still freak out most normal people," he says, laughing, then finally notices the cats who, to judge by the sound, have just knocked over a chest of drawers. He ignores them and we go on.

Einstein's non-narrative approach to music-theater was indeed too much for many people, with its dialogue composed of fragmented speeches, solfège syllables, and numbers, its vastness and repetition, and the free-floating imagery of director Robert Wilson. Outside its theatrical context, Glass' music still finds a peculiar reception in some quarters, even among its greatest admirers. Particularly in his earlier works, the secure tonal framework, repetition, steady pulse, and absence of fleshed-out melodies led to the label "trance music." The music's reputation as a hypnotic, as something able to induce altered states of consciousness like those associated with meditation and drugs, distresses Glass.

"I've heard that comment from so many people over a period of time that I've had to credit them with meaning something," he says. "But my own experience is very different. Were I to be in a state like that I couldn't play the music. In my opinion, the term 'trance music' is pejorative. I think that's true of any of those words that link supposed states of consciousness which are either mystical or religious or elevated or anything, and I don't think it's required that music has to be perceived that way. Music has its own emotional—or if you want to call it mystical—content that doesn't have to relate to things like Zen, or Hindu mythology or peyote. The fact that they all get mixed up in the culture doesn't have very much to do with me." He leaves for the kitchen to make coffee and remarks, "A lot of people hear music and I don't know what the hell they're listening to."

If Mozart had lived to hear all of the romantic narratives and sentimental associations that ensuing generations have attached to his music, he might have said the same thing. Composers charge abstract note-relationships with feeling; audiences grope for stories and real or imagined experience to account for that feeling. The association of Glass' music with "oriental" passivism is tenuous at best, fueled by generalization—"if it's not Western, it must be Eastern"—and by Glass' personal interest in Indian culture. That many have found something profoundly moving in his best work is understandable. But by connecting meditation with Glass' music, the listener may risk trivializing them both. Glass feels that critics have not been helpful in this area: "Sometimes readers take them very literally. They actually prepare people to listen a certain way and they start to hear it that way."

Though the Eastern connection has been grasped too eagerly as the key to Glass' work, the perception has been reinforced by much, especially in his operas, that an American might find

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exotic. Though the life of Albert Einstein could hardly be called exotic in the standard sense, the presentation was grand and enigmatic. *Satyagraha* presented scenes from the young Gandhi's life in South Africa, with a Sanskrit text and stage tableaux that included deities of the Hindu pantheon. The third opera, *Akhnaten,* which concerns the fourteenth-century B.C. Egyptian ruler and religious reformer, hardly promises to be another *Aida.*

For Glass, distinctions between Western and non-Western are arbitrary and misleading: "When I'm interested in a place I don't think of it as a non-Western place, I think of it as another place on a very rapidly shrinking planet that I can get to very easily." The real link, he says, is that the three operas are oriented toward social issues: the first toward science, the second politics, and the third religion. "The idea is that these were three people who changed history through the force of their inner vision, through simply having an idea. And they were all very unexpected people. They changed the world completely," he says.

The Photographer concerns yet another historical figure—Eadweard Muybridge, the pioneer photographer—but in form and character it is a departure. In three acts, which respectively are designed as a play with incidental music, a concert, and a dance, *The Photographer* has a bustling good nature that befits its late nineteenth-century American milieu. It features a song called "A Gentleman's Honor" with lyrics by David Byrne, lead singer-songwriter for the New Wave band Talking Heads.

Even as Glass continues to move into the opera house with its conventional forces of trained singers, chorus, and orchestra, his connection to rock, especially New Wave, remains more than casual. He has produced records for the bands Polyrock and The Raybeats, and is currently producing a "contemporary" version of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* with Ray Manzarek, former keyboard player for The Doors. In this area, as well as most others, Glass works with his co-producer, sound designer Kurt Munkacsi, whose exceptional talents in sound mixing give Glass' Ensemble its signature sound and the recordings their polish.

"I think New Wave is the most interesting area right now," Glass maintains. "In the twenty-five years I've been around New York this is one of the best periods I can think of. The quality of the work is astounding. It's hard to find cities like New York where you have this terrific density of work and activity—it almost becomes a white heat sometimes. That's of course my attraction for being here, why I risk the muggers and all that kind of thing."

Glass remains philosophical about his breakthrough success. "The thing that's important to me," he explains, "is to be able to get these pieces on stage. I'm very lucky to have two of the best young opera conductors as strong supporters—Christopher Keene here and Denis Russell Davies in Europe. It's becoming easier for me to muscle into those places. And that's the impression we get, that we're muscling in, forcing these doors open. . . . I do have a sense that there's a real audience there that cares about what I do. There's no doubt about it. That's real, it's terrific. When we get into things about 'being the hope of classical music,' that's not real."

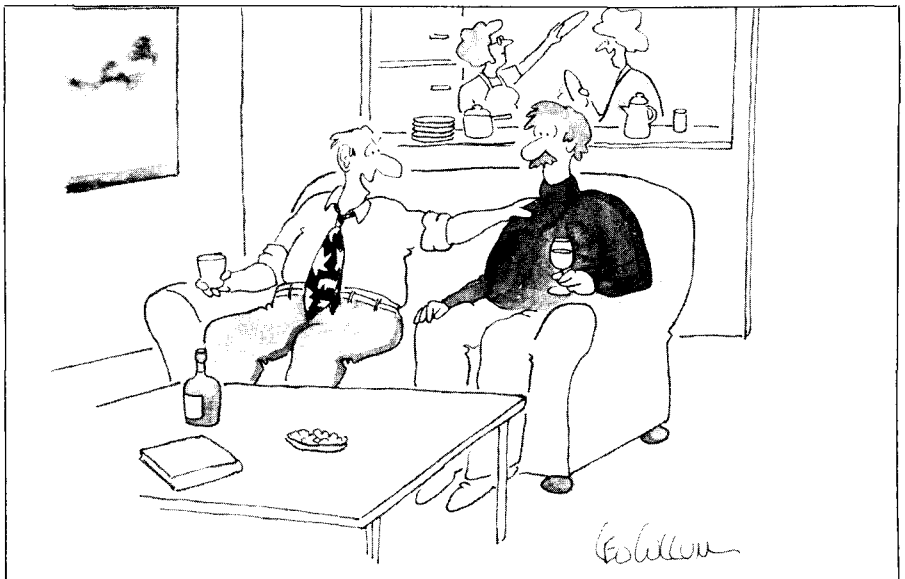
I ask if he saw the people in the audience for *Satyagraha* with tears in their eyes; he says he didn't notice. "When I'm watching a performance I'm too involved with it," he explains. "One thing I did notice, I heard people singing that thing Gandhi sings at the end. It's interesting what they're singing—it's just a scale, but what they're hearing in their heads is the harmony and all of that, and I thought, 'My God! People are actually walking down the street singing my music!' " He starts to laugh, then stops as if it's not such a silly idea after all. "This is everyone's dream," he acknowledges.

Even for those who had long admired Glass' music, *Satyagraha* was a kind of revelation. For instance, that last section he referred to is one of this century's truly exquisite pieces of music. The dramatic substance of the opera brought Glass as close as he has ever come to making explicit the "sacred" quality so many have felt in his music. For neither in his work nor in conversation does Glass willingly make his own spiritual views public.

Soon after *Satyagraha,* Glass had the chance to revisit the Kathakali theater in South India, where he's been many times. "I played *Satyagraha* for them, and they liked it," he says. "I was curious to see what they thought about our treatment of the deities. I suppose they could have been offended, though from my experience of India that could hardly have been likely. The Hindu pantheon is used decoratively, it's treated very casually in that way. I thought, 'Well, maybe I've ripped it off.' But they seemed very pleased that someone had taken it so seriously. What they don't like is hippie versions of that stuff."

"What about your own spiritual values?" I ask.

He pauses, takes his pack of Marlboros and slides the cellophane halfway off, then burns a hole in the cellophane with his cigarette. "Do you know this?" he asks. He blows smoke into the enclosure, then taps it. Tiny smoke rings emerge and slowly disappear. ■



"Relax, Brad. We* all *did a lot of dishes in the Seventies."

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All the News from Lake Wobegon

Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" mixes music, stories, and mock ads to show life in a small Midwestern town.

BY JOHN BORDSEN

At two hours to showtime, the World Theater in St. Paul, Minnesota, holds more déjà vu than a family-filled photo album at a fleamarket. The World was built in 1910 and its 800-seat, iron-and-chewing-gum auditorium has seen a good many better days. The backstage is piled high with old props that have been slid back, become covered with dust, and been left unmolested. The twenty or so people sidestepping rubber-skinned cables and guitar cases also seem from a different time; only digital watches and discreet wrinkles distinguish most performers and technicians from those of the 1960s. Dobros, guitars, and banjos are being tuned backstage, while on the audience side of the backdrop a sound-check is in progress. It is chaotic. Only roaming dogs and politics are missing.

Then up from the audience area, through a doorway and up the backstage steps, comes a massive man who moves like a trained circus bear. There is a reverential hush. "Garrison's here," they whisper.

The host has arrived: Garrison Keillor, the man who has crossed James Thurber, Fulton J. Sheen, and *The Andy Griffith Show* and put the result on Minnesota Public Radio and National Public Radio. Every Saturday, approximately 2 million Americans spend suppertime with *A Prairie Home Companion,* Keillor's blend of ragtime, folk music, stories, and mock ads from Lake Wobegon—the Minnesota-style Brigadoon where lime Jell-O with carrots is still stylishly yummy, and where life in general spins no faster than a Grain Belt beer sign.

The show is successful, to be sure. Keillor has netted a Peabody award and been profiled in newsmagazines; Fran Lebowitz, not known as a lover of anything homespun, found Garrison Keillor "riddled with winning ways." His dust-jacket endorsements are happily received by soon-to-be-published humorists.

Keillor himself is something of an anti-Mitty, whose light touch with microphone and typewriter masks a 40-year-old Midwesterner with doubts about these times and about himself. Onstage nervousness, he explains, "just has to be coped with, that's all. It's made easy; if there was a choice about going on the air, it would be much more difficult. But facing the audience is simply a fact—one of the most unavoidable facts." In a lighter tone he adds, "The consequences of running away from *A Prairie Home Companion* would be far more than the consequences of doing the show."

Keillor, characteristically downplaying himself, comments on his broadcasting success: "I doubt we have one of the most popular shows in radio—that would be top-forty music, disco, or something like that. Nowadays you can't really think of radio in terms of shows, anyhow. It's formats, and ours is a throwback."

Backstage, he glides over the pre-show hubbub with his head raised in thought. Keillor is built like a halfback, but busy eyebrows and forward-tilted glasses give him a pensive look. He is a wise patriarch to the crew and they sometimes call him "the Old Scout." He is automatically given pacing room and a respectful distance. Only his producer talks to him as he chains cigarette after cigarette. When a visitor asks how this program is shaping up, Keillor pauses long enough to unfurl a thoughtfully puzzled expression. "I don't know," he answers slowly. "Something different about tonight. I just don't know what it is." Then he makes for the banjo-picking in the basement.

"Garrison's like this before every show—think nothing of it," someone explains. "The shows are all fresh, and he *is* the show. The performers aren't remembered; he is. He likes to worry a lot, and he's very shy."

No, Keillor is not gregarious. When he ambles onstage just before airtime to thank the warmup band and greet the capacity audience, he talks the way courteous strangers converse in an elevator. His words are spaced with long and hesitant pauses.

"This clock of mine is a bit off," he begins. "But that's all right. I'm not entirely clear—as to what happens. After a point—sing a theme song."

Five p.m. arrives, levers are flipped, and KSJN-FM, the Twin Cities' NPR affiliate, fills the auditorium with the station ID and a live five-second pause. Then his intros and thank-yous. What Keillor says during the show sounds more spontaneous than it is. Although his creative regimen is lax, he does not share his thoughts and fantasies unprepared. "When I write I either stay at home or come to the office," he explains, "and only one thing stays the same

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Garrison Keillor at the World Theater in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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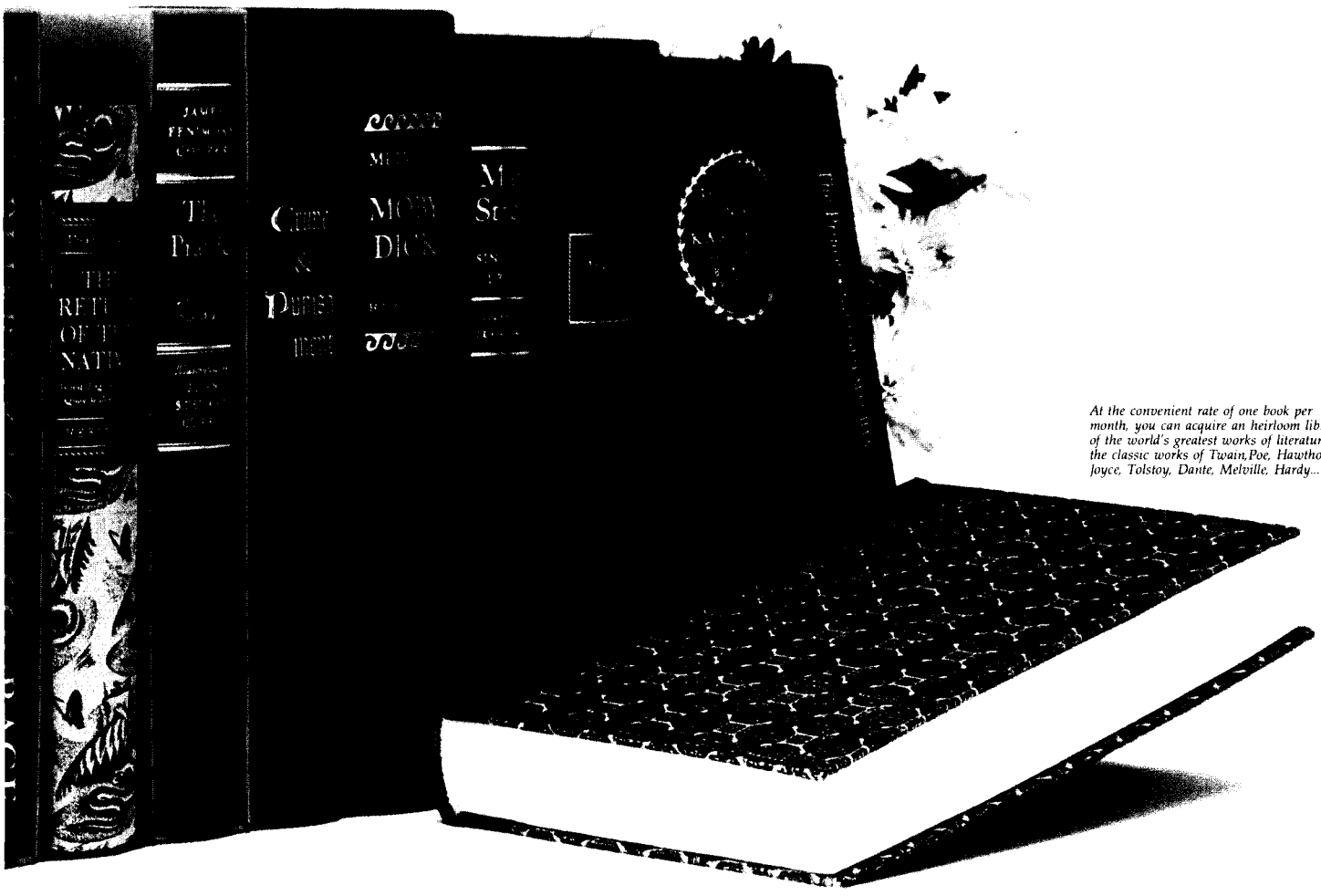

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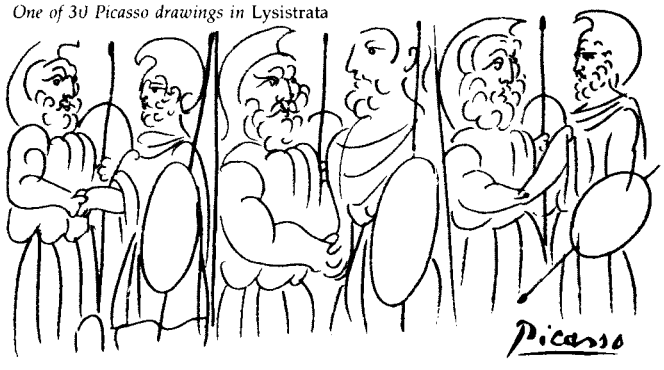

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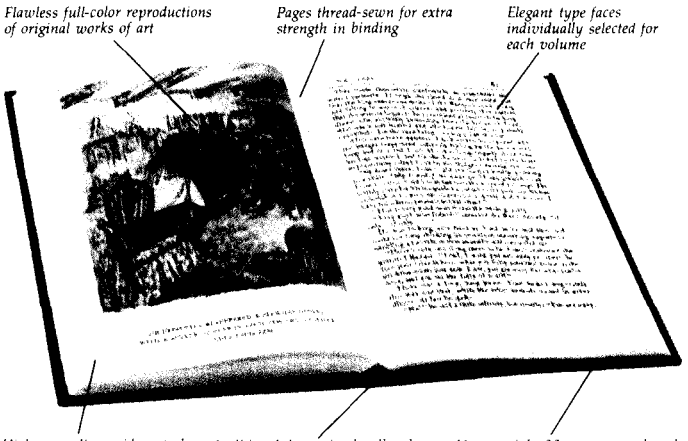
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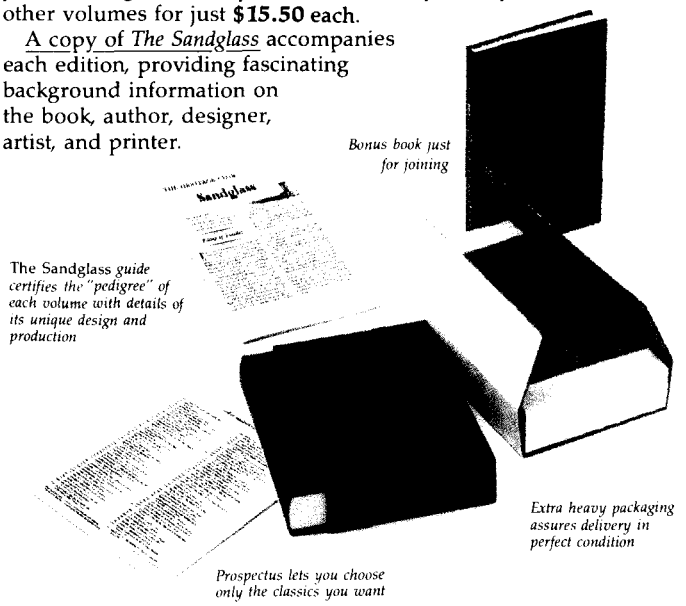
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that I do every day: by 9 o'clock or so I sit down at the typewriter and put paper into it. Then, when I go on stage, I go with whatever I can remember. I don't rehearse or memorize what I'm going to say. I'm not an actor."

Deloyd Hockstetter remembers Keillor's first attempts at public speaking. The Anoka, Minnesota, high school teacher had Keillor as a pupil for junior and senior English.

"He was a tall, thin kid sitting in the back. The students were arranged in alphabetical order—I don't know how Gary got back there. Most of the kids knew who he was but didn't know him. . . .

"He never contributed to class discussions, but one time he gave a laid-back satire about what's in the records in the principal's office. He had them rolling in the aisles, but everything was written out—that's how shy he was.

"The only subject that interested him was writing. One year his class was to put out the high school newspaper. There weren't assignments early in the semester, of course, but in the baskets in the back of the room I'd find articles written by a student who used the name 'Garrison Edwards.' It turned out they were by Gary."

Hockstetter took a personal interest in the boy and would take him into Minneapolis for hours of talk and restaurant coffee. Invariably, Keillor brought along his manuscripts and copies of *The New Yorker,* in which he dreamed of being published. In 1969, after years of typing, the magazine ran the first of many Keillor pieces. Last year, knee-deep in public acclaim, the Old Scout wrote Hockstetter, "Writing is still a pleasure to me after all these years. I've stuck an awful lot of paper into typewriters, but I still get a little thrill with each fresh sheet. One never knows what might result. It's usually dreary but in writing, unlike teaching, we get to destroy the failures. In teaching, all the failures graduate anyway, as I well know, having been one of them."

Keillor thanks the opening band, noting that this is "brought to you by Powdermilk Biscuits, in the big blue box with the picture of a biscuit on the cover, made from whole wheat raised in the big bottomlands by Norwegian bachelor farmers. Whole wheat gives a shy person the strength to get up and do what needs to be done."

His voice downshifts from commercial to avuncular.

"Well, what needs to be done at Christmas time is something I don't think I can stand up here and tell you. I do know that a lot of shy persons try to do too much and take the wrong approach to it. They think at Christmas time about their loved ones and how they've failed them in the past, and not quite been good enough for them. And if there's one thing shy persons have more than anything else, it's a great sense of failure," he confides.

Keillor eventually returns to Powdermilk Biscuit banter—the sugar-coating on a fatalistic discourse spiced with a modicum of wry observation. His Everyman style of writing and delivery pulls it off: to listeners, all dark clouds have a biscuit lining.

The next time Keillor takes the microphone he pitches "Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, 'The Little Town That Time Forgot,' including the Chatterbox Cafe, where Dorothy presides; also brought to you by Skogland's Five & Dime, where you really do find things that only cost a nickel. And by Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery: 'If you can't find it at Ralph's, you can probably get along without it.' Both Ralph's and Skogland's Five & Dime are open until 6:15 every night this week for your shopping convenience." The torpid audience is buoyed. The former ascetic of Anoka knows how to handle a crowd and a microphone.

Young Keillor grew up listening to radio. The family did without TV for quite a while, and in Minnesota radio could offer dreams of acceptance and success. WCCO had much of the Gopher State's ear in those days and one mainstay of the Minneapolis station was announcer-commentator Cedric Adams. Adams came across as a homespun savant by describing life's little intricacies in an intimate, straightforward way. He had remarkable credibility: when Adams offered especially kind words about the Purity Baking Company, the sponsor's bread sales would rise dramatically. Years later, Keillor wrote about skipping out of YMCA

Keillor autographs copies of his *Happy to Be Here.*

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swim classes and the day that he squeezed into the WCCO elevator with Cedric Adams and five or six other people. "I stood next to him, and a sweet smell of greatness and wealth drifted off from him," he wrote.

Tonight when it comes time for Keillor's holiday skit, Butch Thompson, the versatile leader of the house band, sounds a foghorn noise on his clarinet. Other musicians make wave and gull noises.

"Off the rock-bound coast of northern Wisconsin, appearing like so many hairy muskrats in a thick fog off Lake Superior, lie the Apostle Islands, home of the Apostrophes . . . ," it begins. Keillor is the narrator; the others speak bit parts in the same Upper Midwest dialect. *R's* are as hard as tapwater, *O's* long and furless; phrases swing along at a modulated gait.

The play tells how primitive life there is changed by the arrival of a gigantic Muntz TV and a fifteen-mile extension cord in 1951. From the islanders' acquired love for Perry Como springs the legend of Perry Comma, who arrives in a late-model car on Christmas Eve to fill sleeping children's envelopes with valuable Kraft coupons. This jape is well-received; Keillor soft-peddles his recurring theme of materialism and plays it largely for laughs this time.

Keillor learned the disc jockey's trade in college, at the University of Minnesota's campus radio station. There he also edited *The Ivory Tower,* the university's literary magazine. Keillor stayed in radio after his graduation, spinning classics on public stations.

In 1970, he left the Twin Cities for Freeport, an agricultural community two counties and ninety miles northwest. Population: 600. His high school teacher recalls, "He told me that going to the university was the worst thing he'd ever done. He once wrote that people had to find ethics, or science and technology were going to destroy us."

Keillor was searching for a book to complete in the tranquil countryside of Freeport but instead took a shift at a public radio station at nearby Collegeville. That's when Lake Wobegon was born. "I think I used it as a location for some 'sponsors' on the show," Keillor explains. " 'Lake Wobegon' sounded sort of vague, and had an Indian sound to it, as so many towns in Minnesota do. And so, it sat around for a time simply as that—a fictitious name—before I ever started putting people in it." He also wrote short stories about common folks, radio, and small towns that pointed the way to *A Prairie Home Companion.*

Friendly Neighbors, a short story published in late 1973, is written in small-town journalese and is about an annual "Dad Benson Friendship Dinner" held alternately by residents of Freeport and Chaffee, North Dakota. The dinner honors the late Walter "Dad" Benson, whose *Friendly Neighbors* radio show has consisted of Dad, Jo, and Frank holding amiable conversations around a kitchen table. The program has made Dad a beloved figure throughout the Upper Midwest, Keillor writes, but has left the air because a skit backfired. Frank and Jo, played by Ed and Evelyn Moore, move to Fargo; the organist becomes Mrs. N.P. Gruenewald. The kitchen studio is taken over by the show's sponsor and converted into an insurance company cafeteria. Cedric Adams died in 1961 and Keillor has Dad Benson pass away two years later. Life goes on.

And the book? Keillor says it's still unfinished. "I assume everyone has an unfinished book. Mine is set at a radio station and is a comic novel. I got pretty well along on it but I haven't had time to work on it for a while," he explains.

In 1974 Keillor did a nonfiction piece for *The New Yorker* about the Grand Ole Opry. That writing experience led him to create *A Prairie Home Companion* the same year. In 1978 Keillor's show took permanent quarters in St. Paul's World Theater. The World may still be surrounded by peep shows and erotic bookstores, but on Saturdays an almost evangelical fervor comes to this neighborhood—to the World, at least.

On this December Saturday, it crests between 6:07 p.m. and 6:26 p.m., when the host presents the obligatory "News from Lake Wobegon" featurette. The first of his two pieces is light, a reminiscence about the Christmas he returned from the jaded university only to blow any chance for a date with the eldest Ingvist girl. The second and longer story is on the somber side—about a young boy experiencing epiphany as he gazes across the fields.

In a low, slow, and calm voice, Keillor tells how the boy "felt as if he were standing in a Lionel model train layout—a marvelous layout with realistic snow, and little sponge trees that looked real, and houses with lights in them that looked so real. . . . One of those perfect model train layouts that when you sit and put your face down by it you feel like it's the whole world. Right there. And that's the way he felt: that this was the whole world right in front of him."

Keillor stands back, crouches forward, shifts his weight and the microphone from side to side, and gestures with his hands. He is a pastor on a roll, describing his pine-topped Land of Beulah and the feeling of "being in the right place and knowing it." Even backstage, silent people contemplate their denim knees and leather boots through mist-covered eyes.

On Saturdays an almost evangelical fervor comes to this neighborhood—to the World Theater, at least.

But, a biscuit lining is needed, so after musical interludes Keillor puts the comic and corporeal into his Peaceable Kingdom with an ad for Northern Life Support Systems, Lake Wobegon's purveyor of anti-raccoon devices, gopher bombs, and other gadgetry essential for country living. He is conscious of his ministerial and soul-searching effect on listeners, but audience response is not something that particularly interests him.

As he later explains, "I'm more comfortable put into the third person. There's no one character that's more Garrison Keillor than another; there are a lot of characters to whom I ascribe what happened to me; there's not one character I'm especially fond of over another. There's not one hero in the piece. In fact, there aren't many heroes around Lake Wobegon at all." ■

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THE SR INTERVIEW

Overripe Beauty

Film producer Dieter Schidor discusses the late Rainer Werner Fassbinder and his last film, "Querelle."

BY ELIZABETH NICKLES

The extraordinary German film director Rainer Werner Fassbinder died last June at age 36. His prolific career included such films as The Marriage of Maria Braun, Lili Marleen, *and* Veronika Voss. *Fassbinder's last film,* Querelle, *which will be released in the United States in May, is an example of one of the most astonishing imaginations in modern film.*

Querelle *was produced by Dieter Schidor, who knew and worked with Fassbinder for seven years. A German actor, author, and producer, Schidor also produced* The Wizard of Babylon, *a documentary on Fassbinder and the shooting of* Querelle.

The following is a conversation with Schidor, who had interviewed Fassbinder eight hours before his death, immediately following the Italian government's ruling to censor Querelle. *Here, Schidor discusses Fassbinder's life and career and describes the making of his masterwork,* Querelle.

SR *You produced Fassbinder's last film and the only documentary about him. What will people get out of these films?*

SCHIDOR I hope people will feel the price you have to pay for being a genius—that you have to put everything that is inside yourself into your art, and there is nothing left for you anymore. The total loneliness. In *Querelle,* maybe people will get new ideas about themselves. If you're interested in people, then you will learn something about someone who was an interesting person.

Fassbinder and Schidor.

SR *What kind of film is* Querelle? *How will it make people feel?*

SCHIDOR It's a film that's supposed to make you feel irritated. And the fact that the film irritates people is important. A film can't change people. But so few things even irritate these days. If you let it happen, it draws you in.

SR *Where do you think this irritation comes from?*

SCHIDOR From the taboos that are touched. You know, there are three taboos that are probably the strongest in Western civilization. One is murder. One is homosexuality. And one is incest. And those are the three taboos the film deals with. These taboos are being touched, even if people are saying, "O.K., I'm free and tolerant and liberal." You can see it in the movie houses, when people begin to laugh. When they laugh, a very strange laughter comes out. It's the laughter of discomfort, a mixture of fascination and aggressiveness.

I know some people say the film is about homosexuality, but Fassbinder didn't think that at all. He always said it was not a movie about or on any form of homosexuality but about one person's search for identity, with the rituals of masculinity that happen between men and all the dangers that go with them. These dangers include the breaking of taboos.

The main character is at ease with the idea of being a monster, because he knows the fear of being alone. The people are very alone in the film, and everyone who gets close to the main character falls under his spell and becomes endangered. Either they die or they become unhappy.

SR Querelle *was censored in Italy.*

SCHIDOR Censorship is a false act of taking responsibility for men and women who can think for themselves and should be free to choose. I think the whole thing is ridiculous. The pornography happens in the heads of the censors, certainly not in the film, because in the film you never see anything, even in the most sensuous scenes.

In Italy they demanded certain

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cuts. It was a very difficult situation. There were two other famous examples of this in Italy—one was *Last Tango in Paris*. As producer, I would like the film to be seen in its entire length. But I did not dare give a drastic decision. I knew I could not say no completely. Fassbinder would have let it be cut.

The people who dislike the film and attack it savagely now will come to like it ten years from now. This film is a little early, premature. And certainly people will never appreciate it on a very broad scale, in the sense of a film like *E.T.* But in certain intellectual circles, there will be an appreciation for *Querelle* for what it is.

SR *What effect has* Querelle *had?*

SCHIDOR At the premiere at the Venice Film Festival, there were people who were absolutely outraged by what they called the pornography or the obscenity of the film. And then there were the people who thought it was like a holy work of art. After the showing of the film, we were sitting in the Hotel Excelsior with Jeanne Moreau, and two older women came up and said, "We have been your greatest admirers for decades—but that you could do such obscene pornography!" And then there was Marcel Carne, the president of the jury of the Venice Film Festival, who did the great European movies of the 1930s. He declared that when he saw the film he knew instantly that it would be one of the ten most important films in cinema history. There was a big argument amongst the jury over the film, and he left the jury —walked out in front of all the TV cameras and press—because the jury would not award *Querelle* the prize.

SR *Why is the film important?*

SCHIDOR What is important about the film is that it shows a future where feelings will be totally exploited, which is already happening today. It presents the idea that there's no way of treating those feelings other than to exploit them. There will be less and less happiness because people are just not able to function together.

SR *Do you think people related to the characters?*

SCHIDOR No. You can't identify with any of the characters. Never. You push them away. You look at them as if through glass. You wouldn't want to be identified with any of them.

SR *Is there no hope offered by the film?*

SCHIDOR Funnily enough, this was the romantic anachronism in Fassbinder. He changed the ending from the novel, in which there is really no hope at all. But in the film, there is an embrace between Querelle and the man who loves him. He says, "I'm longing to lie on your knees like a Pietà cradling a small Jesus." At that point, your fantasy can continue if you want.

SR *Did Fassbinder have a romantic element?*

SCHIDOR Yes, which became less and less romantic. All groups hated him. The Left certainly despised him, and he was not really Right either. He was somebody who took the right to form his own idea of utopia, of the happiness of society.

SR *Originally Fassbinder had refused to direct* Querelle. *What made him change his mind?*

Jeanne Moreau.

SCHIDOR Two years passed and he became two years older. He sort of aged a decade every year. Physically, but also in the weird wisdom he had. Still, Fassbinder was afraid of the film. The first three days of shooting, he was actually trembling when he came to the set. He realized then he was going on a very tight rope. He said, "I have to move myself between kitsch and fascism here, and I just have to watch it that I don't fall onto either side." Then, on the first day of shooting, he wore a real leopard-skin suit. This was his way of celebrating the moment.

SR *How did Fassbinder see himself?*

SCHIDOR Most of all, he wanted to be famous. When I was with him in New York, we were walking down the street and this guy came up and walked back and forth around us, and suddenly he said to Fassbinder, "You know, you look like this famous German movie director, Rainer Werner Fassbinder." And Fassbinder looked at him and looked away again. Then he smiled and said, in English, "He's much too famous. He wouldn't walk down this street."

When he *was* really famous, he wondered whether he shouldn't take up a second name and make two names famous in one lifetime!

SR *How did he die?*

SCHIDOR It was not suicide, but it wasn't an accident, either. He began to destroy himself twelve or fifteen years ago when he started making films and involving his private life in his movies. He took a lot of drugs, he drank lots of alcohol, he smoked 120 cigarettes a day, he ate like a pig, and thought he was stronger than nature. It was slow self-destruction, but not suicide. And then, since his last lover committed suicide four years ago, he had been totally lonely. So alone. He died on the same day that his lover had committed suicide, four years later. It was also the time of year that he was very depressed. I don't know how he could have gone on for many more years, he was so pessimistic.

SR *The lighting in* Querelle *is unique. All the scenes are cast in orange and blue light. Do these colors have any special significance?*

SCHIDOR The orange is always sunset or dawn. It is like fire. What happens in the film is like a storm of fire. And the blue is really a cold color because the film shows a cold world, the sort of world where there's hardly any hope left. There's only one moment of hope in the whole film. There are scenes where you imagine this is what it must be like after nuclear war, when there would be people left, but they would walk past each other, where there would be no reason to communicate anymore because what has happened has been too shattering. The images can become like an addiction. I get letters from people that say they've seen the film seventeen times. It's the beauty of the film—this orange and blue can become like a drug.

For *Querelle,* all Fassbinder knew was that he wanted this film to be orange and blue. But he didn't plan it out carefully ahead of time or rationalize it. It came from his guts. People like to think Fassbinder was an intellectual, but he was not. For

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example, his first film was a Western. He had always wanted to do a Western. And he was really surprised when the film came out and won every prize in Berlin at the film festival and the critics raved that this was the first real, great parody on a Western. He had actually meant to do a very serious Western.

Fassbinder worked with the same cameraman and lighting man for ten films, and they had worked together many years to achieve what they did. But it was not the camera or the lights, really. It was him. During the shooting, he knew exactly where he wanted which lights. It was Fassbinder who controlled everything. It was never discussed much in advance because he couldn't express what he wanted in words. He felt it. And I think he had learned at one point in his career that discussion meant to implant doubts. He was not always sure of what he was doing, but he was always prepared to try it.

I think that in its simplicity and beauty, the lighting in *Querelle* neared perfection. In his next film, he planned to use black light, ultraviolet light. He would have gone further with colors. But, beyond all this, he thought that the most beautiful colors for movies are black and white.

SR *How do Fassbinder's films treat women?*

SCHIDOR One of the themes that goes through all his films is the exploitation of emotions—how feelings are really used by people to get advantages. And in his films, that is shown in such a subtle, tender, loving way, through women, mainly. Fassbinder thought that it was better to show situations of life through women, because in film you can go further with women than men in showing things. He has done the greatest women's films in postwar Germany—*The Marriage of Maria Braun, Lili Marleen, Lola, Veronika Voss.*

SR *Is he ever accused of exploiting women?*

SCHIDOR I know this is being said. In Germany, some women's groups are speaking against Fassbinder's films. The thing is, he shows how women are treated by men throughout history, the traditional ways of treating women. He didn't say women should be treated like this, or women are cold or egotistical, or, in *The Marriage of Maria Braun,* that women are totally ambitious. I don't think his films are ever reflective, where he analyzes a situation. He could only show, in his very subjective view, *a* situation. He wouldn't even think of using his films to make a point about women.

SR *What about Jeanne Moreau in* Querelle?

SCHIDOR She is the incarnation of woman. She plays the incarnation of woman in Genet's book and, for Fassbinder's fantasy, she was *the* woman. There was originally a second girl in the film and he cut her out because he felt that if there was an incarnation of woman, then there couldn't be a second woman beside her in the film.

SR *Would you descibe* Querelle *as a decadent film?*

SCHIDOR Decadence is in all Fassbinder's films, but he did not have a fascination in the sense of an educated fascination for the concept. Not like in the tradition of the turn-of-the-century French decadence, which was very chic and analyzed. What he does in his movies is show the decadence of emotions.

SR *Many of the contemporary German artists, like Baselitz and Immendorff, have linked the concepts of beauty and decadence. Does Fassbinder do this in* Querelle?

SCHIDOR Totally. This talent is the ability to look at completely normal situations from a different angle, which gives it a new aspect. That's what Baselitz is doing when he paints nudes and hangs them upside down, and Fassbinder films did the same.

I'm more and more convinced that Berlin has a lot to do with it, because all these things seem to come from Berlin. We shot this film in Berlin. All these artists, if they don't live in Berlin, come there frequently. It's a very peculiar situation that lends itself to an extreme form of decadence. The city is like an island. The central point of the confrontation between East and West is a wall in the middle of the city. There's one artist, Salome, who has a flat opposite the wall, and the bed is elevated so he can look out his windows. And what he sees out there are minefields where dogs patrol, and where the soft light goes over those strips of death, the barbed wire. And it's all illuminated at night, and while he's lying there in bed, once in a while he can see somebody get blown up.

Berlin is probably the city with the most extraordinary structure. It's the only city that goes on around the clock. There are discotheques that start at 5 o'clock in the morning. And West Berlin is the city with the highest percentage of sick calls in offices and factories. Schools are totally undisciplined, but not in the way of the South Bronx—in a very decadent way. You see 14-year-olds who are not interested in anything, who don't give a damn about their parents or anything in the outside world. There's a group called the No-Future Group, who are totally against ambition.

To live with this thing, this wall, in the middle of the city, to see that the people who want to come through can only do it with a ninety percent chance of getting killed, not to be able to go out unless you cross two complicated borders where you see dogs sniffing under cars to see whether people are hidden there —subconsciously, I think, something enters into the conscience of your life. People who live with this don't care anymore. They don't care about the old structures of becoming a doctor or lawyer or being nice to their mother. This is reflected in the art.

Fassbinder went to Berlin more and more. And while he was there, he destoyed his hotel rooms, although that was not unusual. At the Pierre Hotel in New York, I had to pay $5,000 in damages. He always slept with a lighted cigarette in his hand, and his fingers were covered with burns. The mattress and the carpet around the bed were always burned. He always pulled the television cords and light fixtures out of walls. He did that in every hotel room. It was quite expensive.

SR *Do you see a difference between the concept of beauty in European and American films?*

SCHIDOR Especially in the films. If you look at what is considered beautiful in American movies, you find Grace Kelly. And beauty in European movies is represented by Jeanne Moreau, for instance. If you compare them by the classical rules of beauty, then Grace Kelly was much more beautiful than Jeanne Moreau. In Europe, though, you find a more intellectual form of beauty. Not just in women. In men, and in situations, also. In *Querelle* the main character commits murder, but not for any real reason. The murder is done beautifully. And the beauty of the murder

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Ken Kesey's Search for the American Frontier

He wrote "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "Sometimes a Great Notion," and after nearly two decades he is writing another novel.

BY PETER O. WHITMER

Imagine the following scenario: novelist John Irving smashes sales records, wows critics, and cultivates millions of fans with his first big book, *The World According to Garp*. It is made into an equally successful movie. He proceeds to place a second gleaming jewel in the Triple Crown of American Fiction with *Hotel New Hampshire*. It is a curiously different book with themes of incest, lesbianism, anarchism and, of course, bears. Next, as his growing public slavers in anticipation and critics wait patiently with an "Okay, wise guy, let's see if you can do it" look on their assembled faces, our hero pulls the literary rug out from under everyone. A public statement is made that he is "leaving literature behind." He descends upon Boston and New York, preaching the use of drugs and living life for the experience of living life. Mocking convention, he breeds a camp following of Day-Glo clowns, forever growing beyond the bounds of its circus tent, forever outdoing its own inappropriate pranks. They buy an old bus, paint it very strangely, and drive across the country, acting very strangely. The once-loved writer leaves the two-thirds-filled Triple Crown, with its assurance of immortality and mortal wealth, lying in the road.

Something very much like this happened once. It was almost exactly twenty years ago. President Kennedy was alive and on the new frontier. Young men wore crew cuts. The Kingston Trio harmonized. Blacks and whites ate, drank, and lived separately. In February of 1962, within days of John Glenn's first American orbital flight, a young writer burst open the inner space of American consciousness with his first book, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Kirk Douglas starred in the Broadway production. Reviews, sales, and the future seemed limitless. Within two years he had done it again with *Sometimes a Great Notion*. Reviewers called it "a fascinating story," "a turbulent tale," "a towering redwood in the fiction wilderness."

Then the huge tree crashed, sending shocks and splinters across the entire country. Ken Kesey went beyond literature, the Merry Pranksters evolved, drug use mushroomed, the Hell's Angels were temporarily tamed, the law closed in. In the end, after busting him twice for marijuana and again after an outlaw stint in Mexico, the men in the black shiny shoes, not the barefoot flower people, got the closest to him. He spent six months on a prison work farm where, ironically, his duties included clearing land behind his own house in La Honda, California.

Now it's 1982. It's quiet up here in Oregon. It has been quiet up here since 1968—that's fourteen years. It has been quiet since Ken and Faye Kesey drove the bus up to an eighty-acre farm and set up living quarters in a big, red barn here in southern Oregon after Ken finished his jail-time.

The directions to the Keseys' were simple enough. Over the phone Faye directed me "two and one-half miles past the gas station. We live in a red barn with a silver star on the side."

The star is shiny aluminum, inserted into a cut-out with a deep-blue ring around it, set against the red of the barn. It's big, six feet across, like some westwardly migrated Pennsylvania Dutch hex sign with a pituitary problem. It is a very American star.

Behind the barn, the bus—bubble-topped, gutted, and covered with graffiti—sits silent and alone.

Behind the barn, the bus—bubble-topped, gutted, and covered with graffiti—sits silent and alone. The sign on the front still reads, FURTHER; on the back, CAUTION: WEIRD LOAD.

Stereo speakers and colored lights are everywhere—hung in trees, on the roof. A lame, blue-and-yellow macaw croaks "goodbye" as we enter. Faye ushers us in, through the vast interior

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of the barn, past one big, round, wooden table by the back porch. Out on the porch Faye calls to Ken as he drives around on a small tractor, pulling bales of hay down by the duck pond for the sheep.

Kesey fits in well out here on this rolling, green farmland. His silvered, tonsured hair is as thick and fleecy as the wool of one of his rams. His chest, his neck are thick like the bulls that are always getting through the fence and wandering amiably down by the duck pond. He comes over to us, says hello, not smiling, not even looking at us. He shakes hands and I introduce Candace and myself. Then he sees the bulls getting through the fence and he turns and runs splay-footed on legs too skinny for his bulky, old wrestler's torso to shoo the cattle back. He seems like a gruff bear.

In a few minutes he returns—whistling, singing, smiling. He says, "Did you know that it was the red-winged blackbirds who wrote the Gillette Razor jingle?" He whistles just like a blackbird, sings a few bars of "look sharp, feel sharp," and a laugh leaps out of his Pendleton-covered chest. It's a laugh that warms us all, that sinks through the drizzly Oregon chill just like a straight shot of tequila.

He sits down with us on the porch, still eyeing the wayward cattle. He looks like a 210-pound, five-foot,

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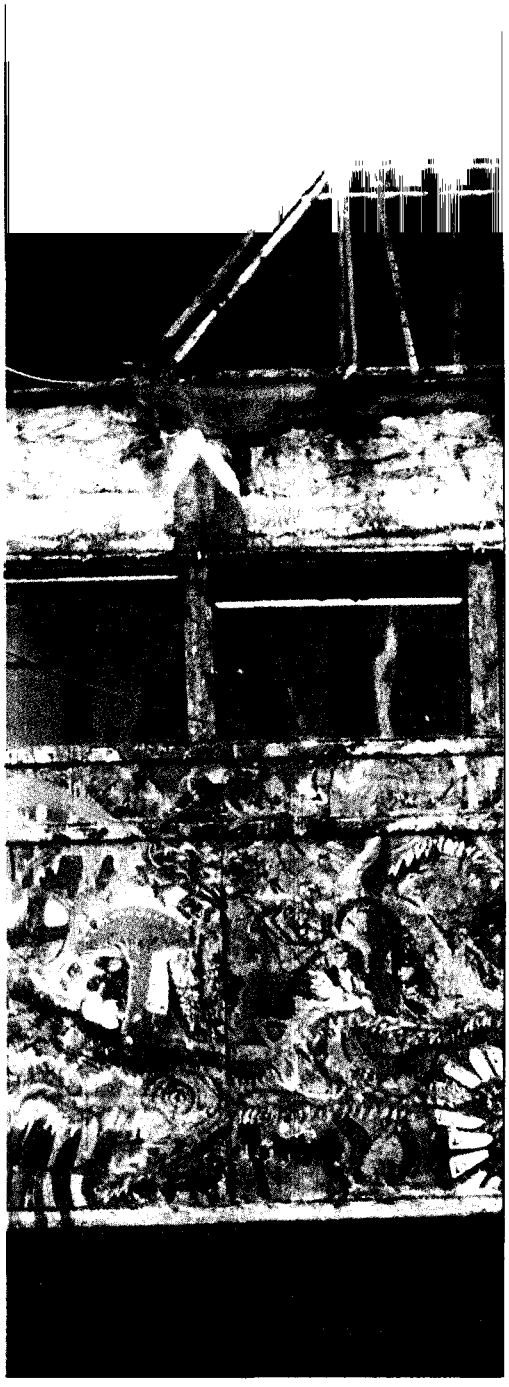

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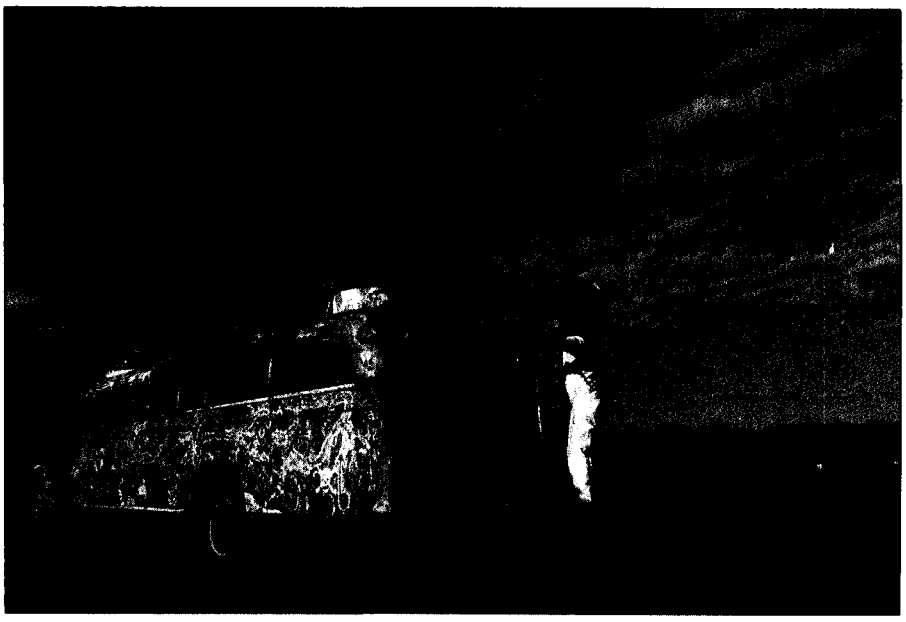
BRIAN LANKER



Kesey emphasizes reality while searching for the magic in life.

BRIAN LANKER

eleven-inch Paul Newman. I begin the interview by asking Kesey if his involvement with drugs and consciousness expansion was a corollary of his writing. "No. The writing is a corollary of my other, deeper interests," he responds. "I have done magic, hypnotism, ventriloquism. I used to have a ventriloquist show here in Eugene as a kid. I still work magic tricks." So saying, he rolls three 50-cent pieces around his fingers and makes one disappear.

"In every high school there is always the weird kid," he continues, "interested in stuff nobody else is interested in—doing tricks, studying the stars, reading science fiction, boiling strange things. He usually has a bad complexion, and the girls aren't big on him because he's so weird."

This was young Kesey—boiling strange things, reading *Childhood's End* and *Magic Mountain*, wrestling, and working on his father's dairy farm. Later, while at Stanford writing *Cuckoo's Nest*, drugs took the place of magic. The humorous twist is that his initial experience with drugs came at the invitation of the United States government, which in the late 1950s was running a series of experiments with psylocibin and LSD in the Palo Alto Veterans Administration Hospital. As a graduate student, Kesey became a paid participant after hearing about the experiments from Vic Lovell (to whom *Cuckoo's Nest* is dedicated) and Richard Alpert

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(later Baba Ram Dass), both graduate students in clinical psychology.

"There was something American about the government conducting these experiments," Kesey thinks. "This was the same consciousness as Lewis and Clark heading into unknown territory. My metaphor is this: the government discovered this room and none of them wanted to go in, so they hired students. As the people came back out of the room, they saw the changes and stopped the experiment about two-thirds of the way through. One of these days they will finish it."

It was during this time that Kesey took a job in the hospital that became the sinister "combine" of *Cuckoo's Nest*. He volunteered for more experiments, finished his manuscript, and went home to Oregon. He had no idea of what was to come.

Kesey's style of life with the Pranksters, bizarre enough to create a stir even in the San Francisco Bay area, was bankrolled by his creative efforts. *Cuckoo's Nest* was written as part of a creative writing program at Stanford University. "I had been writing for some time," Kesey reminisces. "When I finished at Stanford, my teacher, Malcolm Cowley, took the manuscript, and I came back up here and went right to work on my next novel. When the reviews came out and as time went by, I realized that I had written a great book. But that didn't occur to me when I was writing it. I had no idea it would be taken like it was."

The book was in rough form by the time Kesey was 23 years old. His vision of a mental institution as seen through the eyes of a giant, paranoid schizophrenic Indian, Chief Broom, is still one of the most frightening, illuminating, and tragicomic portrayals of America's consciousness to be found in literature. The hardback sold hundreds of thousands of copies. The book still sells well; it is into its sixty-third printing with nearly 7 million copies in print.

Over the next few years, Kesey and his friends began experimenting with inner space. "We got into acid," he explains. "We felt like we were dealing with the end of time. I felt that writing was done for the future and that suddenly we were cut off from the future."

In time, Kesey's perceptions changed, or rather reverted, to a more traditional view. In many ways, especially in how he views America, Kesey is a traditionalist. In 1978, after *Cuckoo's Nest* was banned in Idaho Falls, Idaho, because of its "profane and vulgar language," Kesey began a series of lectures on the merits of teaching Shakespeare and the Bible in high school.

Kesey ended his own psychedelic world because he felt "unconnected, like a boat that is out to sea, drifting around. You reach for the tiller, which is the past, to try and steer toward the future, and it isn't there." He feels strongly that the past should not be cut off from the present. He spent ten years writing about the experiences of the 1960s, filling an entire wing of the library at the University of Oregon, but has published nothing serious since *Sometimes a Great Notion*. He writes every night, all night long. Volumes of work lie unpublished and unproofed. His 1973 work, *Ken Kesey's Garage Sale*, is just that—a collection of rusty, dusty odds and ends, going cheap.

He slams them down on the table and demands, "How would you like it if your best book was plastered with a picture of this five-foot, six-inch wimp?"

As we sit around his wooden table, Kesey talks about the "American Dream." He is an animated conversationalist with a deep sense of concentration. As he talks, he pumps an exercise spring with his right hand. A telephone rings unnoticed; the lame macaw shrieks outside; a teenage boy enters, silently eats a sandwich, and leaves; a dog barks excitedly. All this serves as a backdrop for Kesey as he clicks his hand strengthener, eats guacamole, sips wine, and talks for five hours nonstop. I feel that he would continue spinning metaphors and exploring the future of America even if firetrucks screamed up and hosed down the burning barn.

Referring to some of the social-growth phenomena of the 1960s and 1970s, Kesey lumps Eastern religions, EST, Scientology, Weight Watchers, and "amoebic" dancing into one selfish, cop-out bundle as ways to avoid the realities of the twentieth century and slide by peacefully, cheating society of your possible contributions. He disdains shirking, and in good humor shakes a finger at some of his former sidekicks' alternative lifestyles. Kesey emphasizes the realities of life.

Kesey sees the future as embedded in the present and sees developments such as the Columbia Space Shuttle as reflective of a kind of consciousness that does what society needs to have done. Of his enthusiasm, he says, "It is a very American feeling. It has to do with our destiny as a nation. Our destiny is off the planet. We know what space is—every American knows that if he wants to really get away from it all, all he has to do is to drive for an hour and a half and he'll be in an empty place with no one else around. That is the frontier consciousness that is part of our culture." He sees technology as giving us all an awareness of the environment surrounding us and as allowing us access to the "last new frontier" of space.

For Kesey, the last terrestrial frontier is the American West, populated by bigger-than-life heroes such as Randle Patrick McMurphy of *Cuckoo's Nest*. The critics who saw a contradiction between the Prankster and the brawny, Hemingwayesque lumberjacks who tromp through his books failed to inspect the author. Kesey admires strength in a gentlemanly and Christian way. He chuckles slyly over the length of time it has taken people to realize his first book is a Christian allegory that deals with good and evil. After working in the psychiatric ward at the Veterans Administration hospital, he began to see Freud as a psychological novelist who entirely missed the root of man's insanity. Kesey sees instead an oppression of consciousness that is far more significant than toilet training or coping with rejection.

This oppression has "something to

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do with the American Dream, how that dream gave us our daily energy, and yet had been perverted and not allowed to fully develop," explains Kesey. Of that daily energy, he says, "I am a power junkie. I love power. For one thing, I think it is not corrupting, like some people think; it is purifying. People who think they have power, yet do not, are corrupted. People who really have power are humbled by it."

"This is where the concept of evil comes into play," he explains. McMurphy is the Christian character, the powerful Western Hero, willing to put his life on the line for the downtrodden. The evil is a sickness in the American consciousness that Kesey symbolizes by the "combine." The evil is not the government, not the cops, and certainly not Big Nurse.

Kesey gets exercised discussing this, especially when the topic of the movie version is brought up. He sold the movie rights as a 26-year-old kid for a mere $20,000. The money aspect angers him, and he nearly comes unglued to think that the movie makers missed the point of the whole book by making Big Nurse the villain. He has never seen, and vows he never will see, the movie, but he knows who had the Academy Award-winning role and doesn't like it one bit.

At the mention of this, he jumps up from the table as if he were spring-loaded; guacamole and wine slop all around. He spins to his desk and grabs two brand-new, foreign-language editions of *Cuckoo's Nest*. On the cover, each has a large photograph from the movie of a slightly deranged Jack Nicholson. He slams them on the table in front of us and demands, "How would *you* like it if your best book was plastered with a picture of this five-foot, six-inch wimp?"

I cautiously inquire whom he would have preferred. "Gene Hackman would have been great," he replies.

The 46-year-old Kesey will not be fooled as the 26-year-old kid was. He may talk about the American Dream, but he recognizes that every silver cloud has a lining made of undeniable economic reality. In spite of the income from his two successful books, he lives lean without the typically fat movie royalties, selling chickens and shearing sheep.

He is hard at work on a new book that deals with Alaska. Alaska is the perfect backdrop for his original theme; it is a state where man stands alone in his underwear doing battle with the forces of nature. The book is set in a fishing village on the edge of civilization, where there is a blending of intellect and physical ability that ensures survival if you "have it" and seals your fate if you don't.

The writing has just begun, but it has thoroughly enthralled Kesey. He retreats to his back room every night, where he keeps what he calls his "demon box" of ideas and fragments of plots that he is trying to weave together. Copies of *Alaska Fishermen* and Jack London's books lie strewn about. His mind churns and cranks, trying to jump-start the rusty engines of creative output. He tries new combinations. He experiments with old ones, looking for the right key, the right lock, until the light of dawn shows the grey skies dripping, oozing Oregon wetness. It is tough work. He is looking, digging deeply for that imaginative spark that will ignite the consciousness of a nation as *Cuckoo's Nest* did twenty years ago.

Toward the end of the day I ask Kesey what about himself puzzles him the most. He loses eye contact, looks distant, repeats the question half mumbling to himself, and pauses. He says, "*Interests* is better than *puzzles.*"

He hovers for a while, knowing full well what he is going to say, never wondering for a second which of the many experiences in his complex life has been most interesting. "It's 'Why me?' " he responds. "What is it about me, my family, my father, this part of the country that caused it to be me who wrote *Cuckoo's Nest?* It is not something I set out to do. It's as though all the angels got together and said, 'Okay, here's the message that America desperately needs. Now, let's pick him to do it.'

"Hell, why an Indian?" he continues. "When I wrote that book I'd never known a single Indian. It's strange, like magic, like this 50-cent piece," which is rolling between his wurst-like fingers smooth as mercury down a staircase. "You have to be prepared," he explains. "You have got to stay nimble, because it might happen again. I can go into that back room night after night and sit at the typewriter and nothing will come. I can't push the buttons or pull the levers to make it happen. I could do every drug imaginable and that still wouldn't pull those levers that make for creative release. It is something bigger, more mysterious, a far more abstract force that dictates that. If it happens a third time then I've got to be prepared.

"It's like the 1963 Rose Bowl. A guy named Vanderkelen was quarterbacking Wisconsin against USC, which was the number-one team in the country. Wisconsin was ranked number two, but they were down by thirty points late in the game. All of a sudden, something happened. Vanderkelen started to connect on every pass, and the difference between a completion and a miss is this much [holds finger and thumb two inches apart]. Suddenly *he* knew it. Then his backfield sensed it. Then his linemen felt it. Then his whole team. They just clicked in perfect synchronization for that short period in time. There was an eerie kind of silence in the 100,000 people in the Rose Bowl. No one knew what it was, but everyone knew something special was happening. Vanderkelen threw for 400-and-some yards. One long one was called back, and at the gun USC won 42 to 37, but they were running the ball *backwards* to kill the clock. That game was *Cuckoo's Nest* all over again. It is a special state of grace that simply defies articulation. When that special thing touches you, you know it. I knew it with *Cuckoo's Nest* and with *Notion*, and I'm beginning to feel it with *Alaska.*"

My time is running short, and in taking leave I ask Ken to autograph my copy of *Cuckoo's Nest*. He first looks in the front, finds that it is a thirty-third printing, and agrees that it is, in fact, an old one. He autographs the book by thumbing through the pages, stopping at random two or three times to pick out shards of sentences. He strings them together in a non sequitur that reads, "Pete and Candace; I squirm unconscious through a disturbed administration—Ken Kesey."

As he hands the book back, his laugh rolls out from deep in his wrestler's torso, saying, "Someday, people are going to look at all these autographs and say, 'Now, just what in hell did he mean by that?' "

It seems the Prankster lives on, shedding the years like rain out here in the Oregon Territory, on a farm perched on the brink of tomorrow. ■

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London Theater, 1983: A Season to Savor

Fewer theaters are open, but the new year gains life from new plays by Pinter, Stoppard, Hare, and Pownall, whose "Master Class" is the most absorbing.

BY ROLAND GELATT

These are not the best of times for British theatrical entrepreneurs. Earlier this year, sixteen London theaters—more than a third of the West End total—were dark. Business has picked up since then, but not enough to dispel certain gloomy forebodings. Those elegant Edwardian playhouses that are among the special delights of London may well become candidates for the wrecker's ball if they remain shuttered too long. Despite the bad omens, there is still more theatrical activity in London than anywhere else in the English-speaking world. A season that has brought new plays by Stoppard, Hare, and Pinter, a couple of glossy musicals, and some distinguished productions of Shaw and Shakespeare is not dead yet.

Felicity Kendal and Roger Rees in *The Real Thing*.

Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* is one of the few new plays, as distinct from revivals or musicals, attracting capacity audiences in the commercial West End. Although his gift for lightning wordplay remains unimpaired, as his recent pun-filled adaptation of Nestroy's *On the Razzle* joyously demonstrated, this antic playwright has for some time been working his way toward a more sober persona. *Night and Day* and *Every Good Boy* heralded the change, and his latest work confirms it. In *The Real Thing* we are thrust into the turmoil of adultery among trendy high-achievers, a subject much on the minds of contemporary British playwrights (compare Pinter's *Betrayal,* Peter Nichols' *Passion Play,* Simon Gray's *Otherwise Engaged).* Stoppard has seemingly attempted to anticipate the charge that he is tilling an already well-plowed field by inserting a kind of apologia in the second act. The central character, a writer named Henry, is the author of a successful play about adultery. His teenage daughter complains: "Well, it wasn't about anything, except did she have it off or didn't she? What a crisis. Infidelity among the architect class. Again." To which Henry quietly replies, "It was about self-knowledge through pain."

Banal or not, never have the familiar tribulations been limned with greater literacy, style, or verbal precision. Stoppard's concern for language emerges in a stunning paean to the power of words:

"They're innocent, neutral, precise, standing for this, describing that, meaning the other, so if you look after them you can build bridges across incomprehension and chaos. . . . They deserve respect. If you get the right ones in the right order, you can nudge the world a little or make a poem which children will speak for you when you're dead."

Rodger Rees (alias Nicholas Nickleby) is wonderfully engaging as Henry, and so is Felicity Kendal as the wife he adores in good times and bad.

The new David Hare play, now in repertory at the National Theatre, explores less-frequented territory and announces a conscious decision by this playwright to move away from

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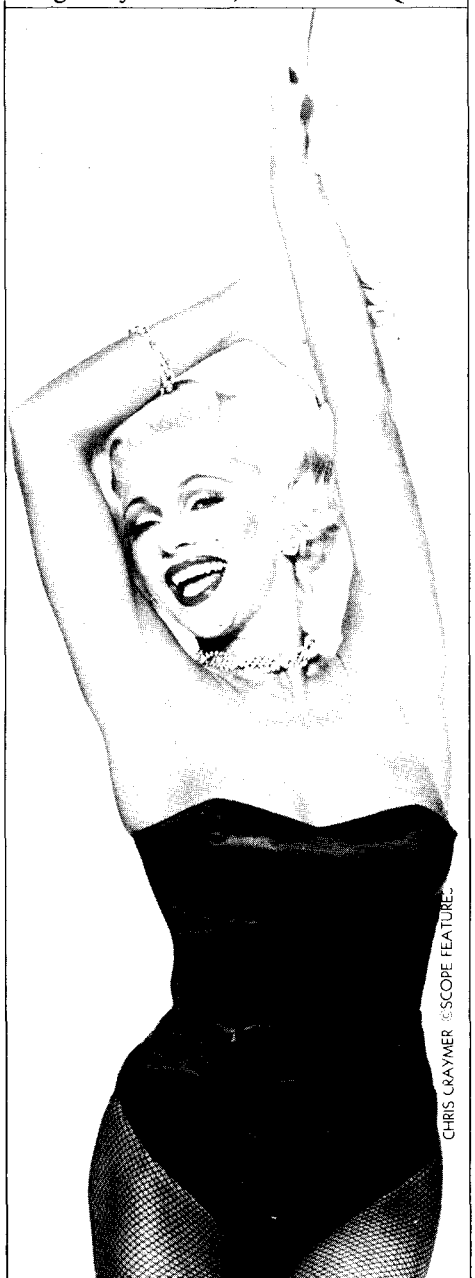
his erstwhile preoccupation with the decline of England. Its title, *A Map of the World,* derives from a dictum by Oscar Wilde: "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth glancing at." In this case the rather faint prospect of Utopia is on the far horizon of a UNESCO conference on world poverty taking place in Bombay. The keynote address is to be given by Victor Mehta, distinguished Indian novelist and longtime resident of England, who has learned to view the Third World and its aspirations with some well-honed skepticism and ironic detachment. Not so Stephen Andrews, a young English journalist buoyed by the notion that struggling young nations could eventually inherit the earth if only cynics like Victor Mehta would give them half a chance. Their philosophical disagreements form the argument of the play.

Based on David Hare's past form, leftist and anti-establishment, one might reasonably expect that the balance would be tilted unmistakably on the side of progress, idealism, and the perfectibility of man. But if that was the playwright's intention, he has strewn the path with wrong turns. To begin with, the confrontation between worldly Victor and yea-saying Stephen quickly deteriorates into sexual rivalry over an attractive American actress hanging around Bombay, who offers to spend the night in bed with the winner of the argument. This is not only absurd but frivolous, and becomes all the more so when the final showdown is evaded. Moreover, the playwright makes it devilishly hard for his audiences to know just what is going on, because part of the action is "real" and part takes place on the film set of a movie based on Mehta's account of the incident. The same actors appear as their true and their cinematic selves, and the transitions from Bombay to the film studio in England are exceedingly murky. Though the device gives Hare an effective last scene, it causes unnecessary confusion en route.

The confusion is further deepened by the character of Victor Mehta himself. Devil though he may be according to the playwright's reckoning, he certainly enjoys the best lines. Anyone who has ever sat through the appalling tedium of a UNESCO conference will delight in the wicked denunciation of that organization which David Hare has put into Mehta's mouth. In the National Theatre production he is played with persuasive charm and urbanity by Roshan Seth, an actor who had all but abandoned a faltering career on stage and in film until Richard Attenborough plucked him from obscurity for the role of Nehru in *Gandhi.* Bill Nighy blusters convincingly as the English journalist, but Diana Quick



Stephanie Lawrence in *Marilyn.*

(Sebastian's sister in *Brideshead)* is quite awful as the American actress.

The new Pinter, *Other Places,* also in repertory at the National Theatre, is in reality three Pinters—a trio of unconnected one-act plays. The first two are brief variations on the familiar Pinter theme of noncommunication, masterly in style though very much the mixture as before. The third, *A Kind of Alaska,* breaks new ground. Its inspiration comes from Oliver Sacks' book *Awakenings,* which describes some case histories of sleeping-sickness victims brought back to life by a new drug after a quarter-century or more of motionless and speechless trauma. Pinter's playlet is about one such, a girl-woman named Deborah who has succumbed to the malady at age 15 and is revived, with memories and perceptions unchanged, some thirty years later. It provides a stunning vehicle—both funny and wrenchingly poignant—for Judi Dench, who earlier in the season triumphed as a youngish, totally unbesotted Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest.*

Plays about music and musicians seem very much in vogue. Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* has just ended a three-year run in London, and soon to arrive is Peter Ustinov's *Beethoven's Tenth,* in which the composer returns to earth to plague the household of an avant-garde music critic. Meanwhile, there is *Master Class,* to my mind the most absorbing of the season's new offerings.

Master Class is the work of David Pownall, a 45-year-old novelist, poet, and playwright whose *Livingstone and Sechele* won a Tony award in 1978 for Best Foreign Play Off-Broadway. *Master Class,* first produced in January at Leicester's Haymarket Theatre (where I saw it) and about to open in the West End, is based on the infamous 1948 Musicians' Union conference in Moscow, at which several of Russia's most celebrated composers—Prokofiev and Shostakovich among them—were savagely attacked for "anti-Soviet practices" in their music. The play is set in a tastelessly ornate salon within the Kremlin. Prokofiev and Shostakovich arrive to be greeted by Stalin's cultural henchman, Andrei Zhdanov, and soon by Stalin himself for what turns into an all-night session on the creative artist's duty to an omnipotent state.

Putting it thus risks making the piece sound like an abstract dissertation, when in fact it has great dramatic momentum, with moments of chilling terror offset by stretches of hilarious tomfoolery. The two composers are comrades in agony,

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frightened as well as revolted by having to defend themselves in such circumstances. Quickly their differing characters emerge: Prokofiev debonair, maliciously witty, and plainly better able, despite his physical infirmities, to stand up for himself; Shostakovich pathologically tense, moody, utterly unable to make light of his predicament. Throughout most of the evening Zhdanov seems boorish and philistine, a thug doing the boss's bidding, until he sits down at the piano and performs Chopin with such sensitivity that even Prokofiev begins to listen admiringly. Stalin dominates the play—a menacingly mercurial tyrant, at one moment warm and charming, at the next brutal and ruthless, equally expert at cajolery and vituperation, but a man always aware that his two ill-at-ease guests are geniuses of the first rank. His is a rich role, played with riveting skill by Timothy West, whose repertoire of previous impersonations has included the likes of Edward VII, Churchill, and Sir Thomas Beecham.

Not many scripts call for four actors who can acquit themselves reasonably well at the piano, and in this production they really do play; there is none of the usual faking at the keyboard while a tape recording supplies the sound. The climax comes when the two composers collaborate, with mixed feelings of professional craftsmanship and aesthetic disdain, on the composition of a Georgian folk cantata based on a theme provided by Stalin. This makes an appropriately virtuosic conclusion to a work that deals entertainingly as well as seriously with the art and politics of music.

Shaw's status as a classic second only to Shakespeare has been confirmed this season with three major productions. *Major Barbara,* that sparkling examination of money, power, and the evil of poverty, was on view at the National Theatre throughout the fall and winter in a competent but unremarkable staging by Peter Gill. This was followed by a run of *Man and Superman,* in which Peter O'Toole's breathless star-turns as Jack Tanner seemed bizarrely aberrant at first but ended convincingly through sheer vitality and flamboyance. Best of all is an all-star revival of *Heartbreak House* directed by John Dexter, now at the Haymarket (until June 4).

If this "fantasia in the Russian manner" is infrequently staged, it is in part because of its allusive manner and, for Shaw, prevailingly somber mood, but even more because it requires eight highly accomplished actors for its key roles. In this current production the play has a nearly faultless cast. Rex Harrison as the patriarchal Captain Shotover proves anew at the age of 75 that he is *primus inter pares* when it comes to finding Shaw's tricky cadences, and it is good to see him back on the London stage in a part worthy of his talents. His Shotover is at once daft and bearishly lovable; there can be no doubt why young Ellie Dunn chooses him in the end as her spiritual mate. The Captain's two daughters are in equally gifted hands. Diana Rigg, also returning to the London stage after a long absence, is a seductive Hesione Hushabye, Rosemary Harris an imperturbably attractive Lady Utterword. Even relatively minor parts have been cast in strength, with Simon Ward *(Young Winston)* as Randall Utterword and the veteran Doris Hare as Nurse Guinness. It's unlikely that a better acted or directed *Heartbreak House* ever will come our way.

Your correspondent caught it on tour, prior to the London opening, at the newly refurbished Theatre Royal in Bath, which dates from 1805 and is a particularly fine specimen of Georgian theatrical architecture. Thanks to the initiative of a local businessman named Jeremy Fry and to the generosity of numerous benefactors, the old playhouse has

Doris Hare, Rex Harrison, and Mel Martin in *Heartbreak House.*

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been thoroughly and sensitively restored in front of the footlights and completely rebuilt behind them. The new stage can easily accommodate most touring productions, and as a result Bath's once-languishing Theatre Royal is now booked solid throughout the year. One hardly needs an excuse to visit Bath, but playgoers now have an added reason to put it on the itinerary. The place to stay is the exquisite Royal Crescent Hotel, plumb at the center of the town's most elegant parabola.

The Shakespearean pièce de résistance of the London season has been *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the National Theatre—the most inventive and successful production of the play since the magical, athletic Peter Brook reinterpretation of the 1960s. Conceived and designed for the smallest and least formal of the NT's three playhouses, the Cottesloe, it has just been transferred to the larger and more sedate Lyttelton Theatre with the original cast almost intact—excepting, alas, Paul Scofield as Oberon.

Like Trevor Nunn's *All's Well That Ends Well* for the Royal Shakespeare Company (now playing a sixteen-week run on Broadway), Bill Bryden's *Dream* at the National Theatre has been moved in time to the early years of this century. The four lovers could have strayed off the set of *Man and Superman;* the rustics are attired in the sturdy outfits worn by British working men circa 1910; and even the fairies sustain the Edwardian illusion with their Arthur Rackham-like costumes and spiky hair-dos. The effect of this updating is to make the action more approachable, direct, and palpable without at all detracting from the gossamer verse. In the compact Cottesloe, this sense of immediacy and contact was heightened by having the actors sit alongside, descend upon, and otherwise closely mingle with the spectators seated on cushions around the theater's bare playing area. How the production is faring in the very different ambiance of the Lyttelton remains to be seen (the transfer took place after this report went to press), but I suspect that Bryden's accomplished troupe continues to enchant in the new surroundings.

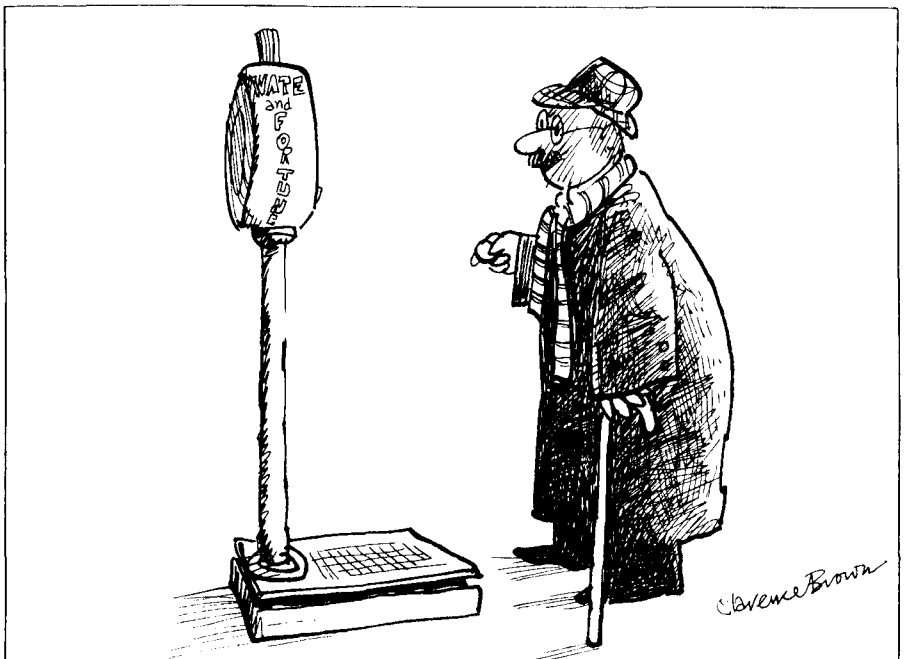
Finally, the musicals. For years London's theaters subsisted almost entirely on imports from Broadway. These still figure prominently on the

Pownall's *Master Class.*

bill of fare (the current crop includes *Pirates of Penzance* in its Americanized reincarnation, *Fiddler on the Roof, Call Me Madam,* and the National Theatre's scintillating *Guys and Dolls),* but the homemade product is getting increasing exposure, and not everything comes from the prolific Andrew Lloyd Webber. The big hit of the Royal Shakespeare Company's first season at the Barbican Centre was *Poppy,* a mordant musical extravaganza about the nineteenth-century Opium Wars in China, with text and lyrics by Peter Nichols and a score by Monty Norman. Though it has now made way for a new season of Shakespeare at the Barbican, there are plans to move *Poppy* to the West End and thence to Broadway. Another indigenous musical presently on view in London is a revival of *Mr. Cinders,* a frothy rags-to-riches fable originally produced in 1929. Like *Poppy* and the three Andrew Lloyd Webber shows running in London, *Mr. Cinders* is an indisputably British confection.

But what are we to call *Marilyn,* a cradle-to-deathbed celebration of the film star, written by Americans Jacques Wilson and Mort Garson, directed by the American Larry Fuller, produced and financed by Americans, yet created for London with an all-British cast? An Anglo-American musical, I suppose. It is perhaps the harbinger of a trend, for this fall the subsidized National Theatre is putting on an as-yet-untitled musical about the life of Jean Seberg, with a score by Marvin Hamlisch and text and lyrics by Christopher Adler and Julian Barry—Americans all, though Sir Peter Hall will direct and the cast will be all-British. The clue to these hands-across-the-sea collaborations can be found in the economics of show business: musicals are cheaper to launch in London than in New York. Both productions will doubtless cross the Atlantic in due course, and in the case of *Marilyn* at least, it might be better to wait for the show's repatriation. Though Stephanie Lawrence is reasonably convincing as the idolized film star, the big production numbers lack the ultimate verve and polish that can make a middling musical not only endurable but enjoyable. This is one thing Broadway still does best. ■

[1]Roland Gelatt is an SR contributing editor.



"The other day, for a dime, you told Sullivan he was handsome and sexy. I'm holding in my hand half a dollar. . . ."

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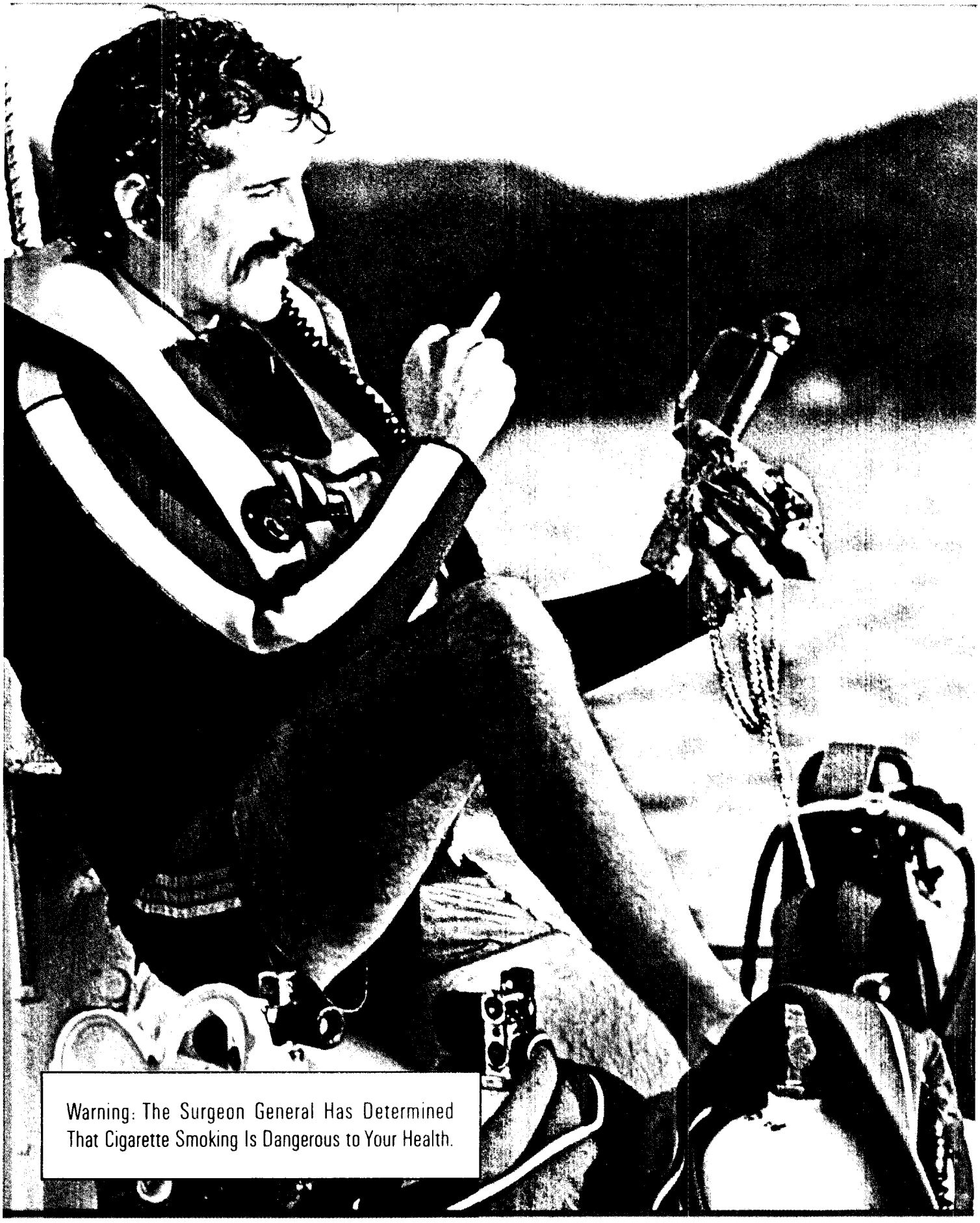

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LANGUAGE

Thomas H. Middleton

It Gets My Goats

A lady who for reasons of her own says, "I hope you don't need to use my name," has sent me an intriguing letter with photocopies of clippings illustrating a phenomenon I had not noticed, but which I find quite disconcerting now that she has brought it to my attention. This happens frequently, I think. Some strange new usage creeps in, and we fail to see it ourselves, but then someone points it out to us, and from that moment on it drives us loony. So, at the risk of putting a mischievous little bat in your belfry, I'll pass along the pet peeve that Madame Troublemaker (not her real name) has shared with me.

She has sent me forty-one—count 'em—instances of pluralization: in this case, the pluralizing of nouns that not only do not need to be pluralized but frequently become almost nonsensical with the addition of the unnecessary *s:*

"There is more than a 'flap' over management going on. We are fighting for our homes and our way of lives."

"After some trial and errors, she developed the poise of a champion."

"Mrs. Tippie and other families said they had difficulties believing that their loved ones were dead."

This last one is a beaut. We could reasonably take it as meaning that Mrs. Tippie and the others, believing that their loved ones were dead, somehow had difficulties, presumably as a result of holding that belief. "Had difficulty believing" would clearly have meant that it was difficult for them to accept the fact that their loved ones were dead. "Had difficulties believing" suggests that they had a number of tough problems as a result of their believing.

Several of these gratuitous pluralizations are of the word *death:* "A Cable Snaps—and Five Workers Plunge to Deaths"; "Murder and arson caused the deaths of a woman and her young son"; "The defendant is charged with first-degree murder in the deaths of two men and a woman." There is nothing wrong with the word *deaths,* but it is, or has been, a rarity in literature, I think. *Julius Caesar* comes to mind: "Cowards die many times before their deaths; / The valiant never taste of death but once." On the other hand, Richard II keeps death in the singular: "For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground, / And tell sad stories of the death of kings."

I wanted to confirm my memory of the *Julius Caesar* quotation, so I opened my *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations.* That particular line is not listed in Oxford, but there are approximately 400 citations for the word *death* and exactly four for *deaths.*

"Five workers plunge to deaths," literary tradition aside, is inept phrasing. "Plunge to death" presents an uncluttered image, but "plunge to deaths" evokes an image of five workers plunging to their respective deaths on separate days, or at least at different times.

Madame Troublemaker also includes a plural that has bothered me for several years. The clipping refers to "compulsive self-destructive behaviors such as the inability to stop gambling, drinking, eating, or using drugs."

To my mind, *behavior* cannot be a plural. There is good behavior and bad behavior, but they are not two behaviors; they are two types of behavior.

Behaviors seems to be a standard word for writers on child psychology and problems in the school room. Where you or I might say, "The child behaves badly," or "The child's behavior is driving me crazy," or even "This kid is a pain in the neck," one who writes in child psychologese would probably put it as "The child exhibits inappropriate behaviors" in the mistaken belief that he has described the situation more accurately than you and I. The fact is that none of us has said a great deal so far; but you and I would probably go on to specify the types of behavior we're referring to, while the psychologist would enumerate the "behaviors."

Hang on. I'm about to digress. I'm going back to my childhood. As a rule, I behaved well in school, but I remember doing something that, in those bygone days before the invention of the ballpoint pen, was almost a cliche of naughty-boy behavior. I dipped one of the long blonde braids of the little girl seated in front of me into my inkwell. I really did. In my case, I'm pretty sure that there was absolutely no malice in it. I doubt that I even thought of the pigtail as hair belonging to the little girl. Dipping it into the ink just seemed like a natural thing to do, like dipping a paintbrush into a pot of paint. My absence of malice probably did very little to assuage the feelings of the blonde or of her mother or of the teacher, but it makes me feel better at this distant remove. I'm sure that from their several points of view my behavior was atrocious; from my point of view, it was certainly thoughtless, but it didn't rate all that fuss. The one thing I'm sure of in my own mind is that it wasn't *a behavior:* it was behavior, or a type of behavior.

I thank Madame Troublemaker for reminding me of it. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann

Last of the Mohicans

Two recent New York productions of Sam Shepard plays were not only gratifying in themselves, they illuminated elements of the whole Shepard career. Those elements compose his uniqueness. Now 40 years old, he has written some forty plays since 1964, short and long, in differing forms and voices, with differing artistic success but always with fire and self; yet, though he is internationally known and is a Pulitzer laureate, he has never been produced on Broadway. This speaks to his maverick quality. He has acted on stage and screen—his latest picture is *Frances*—and his lean powerful presence would probably make him a film star if he had the time and interest. His acting talent helps explain his theatrical fluency. And he is an accomplished jazz and rock composer-performer, abilities that are almost always manifest in the diction and rhythms of his writing.

Shepard's *True West* had its first Manhattan production in 1981 at the Public Theater amid a publicized dispute between the author and the producer, Joseph Papp. Shepard's opinion of this later production is not available (I don't think he has seen it), but it is perceptibly better than the first. It was directed with fair competence by Gary Sinise, who also plays, somewhat threadily, one of the two leading roles, a young screenwriter named Austin who is slogging away at a script for a producer. Austin is serious, married though alone at the moment, and goal-targeted. His older brother, Lee, played with scary, self-appreciated menace by John Malkovich, breaks in on his solitude. Lee is his brother's opposite, feral, shrewd, a petty thief and gambler. Austin is combining his work with house-sitting for his vacationing mother near Los Angeles, when Lee turns up unexpectedly. Thus these contrasting brothers meet, figuratively within the mother's embrace, in her tidy kitchen and breakfast nook. Their father, never seen but often mentioned, is presumably her opposite, an unruly drunk much like the father who *is* seen in Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*.

> "True West" is like a contemporary version of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn.

Contrasting parents produced contrasting sons. The play proceeds to dramatize the volatility created by the differences between Austin and Lee, to suggest that they are opposing but matching components of one human nature. Lee's intrusion, sniffing out money and thievery possibilities, unsettles Austin's balanced life, and leads to a reversal of their roles. Austin's producer, who comes in for a time, is persuaded, almost bullied, by Lee into taking on a Western story that Lee has cooked up, a true Western. (What, Shepard implies, would this producer of synthetics know of the true West?) Austin is now supposed to write the script of Lee's story, but in drunken disgust goes out to steal while Lee is left to slam the typewriter.

The drama is brought to a head, but not resolved, by the sudden return of their mother. The play ends with the two brothers, stripped to primitivism by their conflict, tensely facing each other, with the next move—let alone the conclusion—in dangerous doubt. Through much of its being, *True West* is like a contemporary version of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, each older of course and wised-up, one from a neat life and the other from a disorderly world; except that this Tom and this Huck are locked in a tension of possible interchange, are imprisoned by brotherhood rather than the edges of a raft, are barreling toward confrontation not sailing to adventure.

Confrontation between two men, linked but hostile, is also the essence of *The Tooth of Crime* (first produced in 1972). Vividly, violently, yet subtly directed by George Ferencz, this new production originated at the Syracuse Stage in upstate New York and was brought to the La Mama E.T.C. off Broadway. The two-tiered setting by Bill Stabile concealed a rock band in the shadows of the bottom half, while the action took place on a slanting platform above, furnished only with a small sofa and lighted with intense theatricality by Paul Mathiesen.

Ray Wise, one of America's as-yet-unrecognized acting treasures, played and sang Hoss, an aging rock star living in apprehensive and guarded isolation, fearful that his reign is on the wane. His challenger is a rock singer called Crow, played and sung by Stephen Mellor in a mode to match the name, except that his singing didn't croak. Hoss learns that Crow is coming to his stronghold, orders that the younger man be admitted, and challenges him to a duel to settle supremacy. The weapons are rock songs and tirades in rock language, but the contest is classical: Hector versus Ajax, two medieval

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knightly champions settling a war. And beneath these classical implications is the image of two king stags battling for a forest realm.

Shepard has never sensed better the rhetorical possibilities in the vernacular, has never written more pungently than in this play, that duel. Hoss savagely attacks the weakened Crow:

"You a blind minstrel with a phoney shuffle. You got a wound gapin' 'tween the chords and the pickin'. Chuck Berry can't even mend you up. You doin' a pantomime in the eye of a hurricane. Ain't even got the sense to signal for help. You lost the barrelhouse, you lost the honkey-tonk. You lost your feelings in a suburban country club the first time they ask you to play 'Risin' River Blues' for the debutante ball. You ripped your own self off and now all you got is yo' poison to call yo' gift."

It's the modern counterpart of the frontiersman's invective, those wild furry arias that Mark Twain loved. Despite this outburst and others, Hoss loses his crown. Power is fickle: it moves from one man to another in Shepard plays. *The Tooth of Crime* (I've never understood the title) ends with the victorious Crow singing "Rollin' Down," one of eight songs that Shepard wrote for the play.

Shepard overflows with gifts. The penalty—there's always a penalty—is that they sometimes sweep him along without permitting him time to refine his work. Not all of his plays are as fulfilled as these two. Sometimes he grasps so eagerly at myth that he fumbles it, as in *Buried Child*, his Pulitzer play. Sometimes he starts a play with a dam-burst of energy, as in *Curse of the Starving Class*, then falters halfway along, and pulls out sweaty pop devices to see him through. These potentially fine plays, and some others, are waiting for Shepard to finish them some day. But fundamentally his work never lies limp, never imitates, and never does less than mock most contemporary playwriting just by showing what the theater can be.

Shepard's imagination feeds on the fast-food data of his America, the juke, the jive, the comic-book fantasies, the movie mystique and, especially, the car mystique. Automobiles are like banners in his plays. When Hoss hears that Crow is approaching, he asks, "What's he drivin'?" When his aide replies, "A '58 black Impala, fuel injected, bored and stroked, full blown 'Vette underneath," Hoss says, "I'm gonna like this dude. O.K. let him through." Shepard also hates that very same America because it is rolling over his "true West." With the language of his day raised to bardic heights, he does battle against it on the oldest of our battlegrounds, the clash between innocence and use, the frontier and the city. The battle may be between farmers and real estate developers as in *Curse of the Starving Class*, or between job-holding and instinctual life as in *True West*, but it is that mythical West, that sustaining West, that Shepard is struggling to preserve from the onward roll of the cement mixers.

This obsessive theme puts Shepard in a great American line. From Cooper's Natty Bumppo to Faulkner's Isaac McCaslin pursuing the bear, our best writers have sought out whatever danger was left in their time and have cherished it. I don't equate Shepard with his predecessors, but I do see him clearly as their scion. He says, as they said, that this once was a New World, a dream of Horizons. Must it wither at the heart just because it is physically crowding up? Must it become like the Old World, just because so much of the Old World is becoming like us?

With imperfect artistry but with art nonetheless fierce, Shepard is refusing merely to mourn. He mourns, all right, but he fights. ■

CAROL ROSEGG

In *The Tooth of Crime*, Ray Wise and Stephen Mellor fight a classical duel with the weapons of rock and roll.

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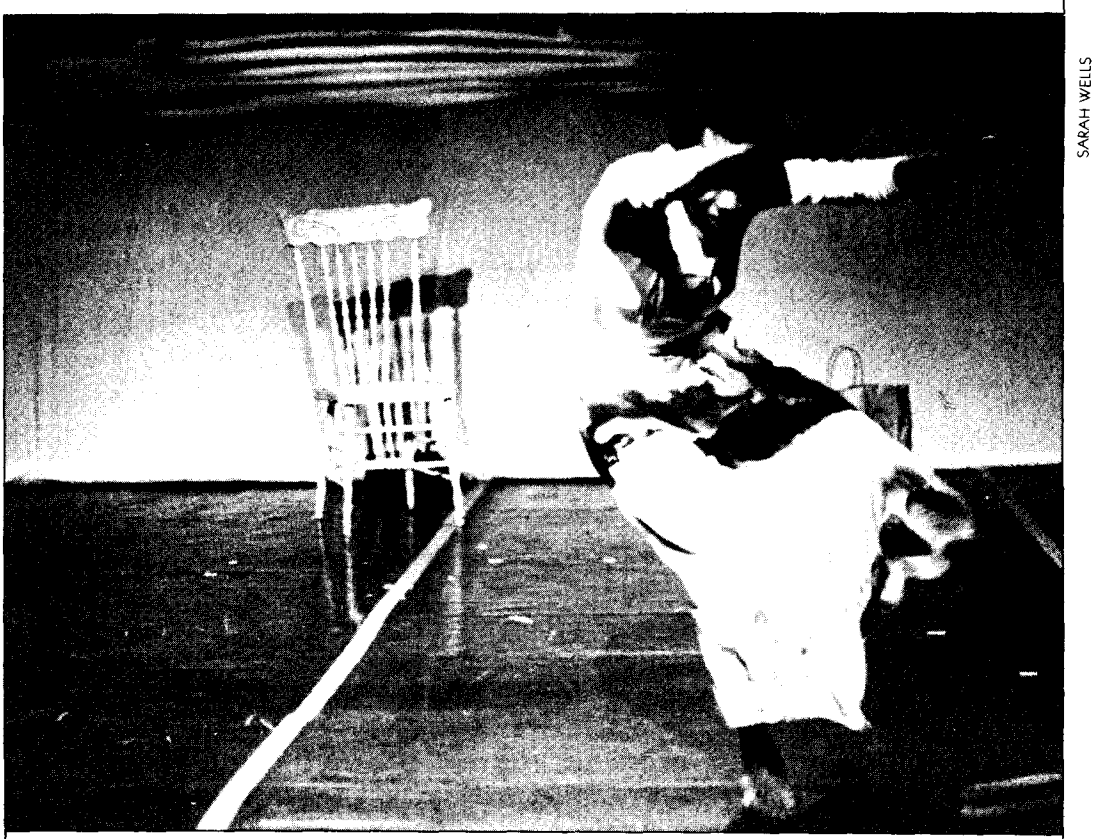
Nancy Goldner

Electric Cooking

Some performers start at a slow burn and woo their audience's sympathy. Blondell Cummings presents the full force of her personality from the start. A dancer *and* actress, she can snap the audience to attention with her back and ankles as well as her face—that is, she has at her disposal the dramatic resources of her entire body. But what makes Cummings especially electric cannot be explained more singularly than it can for any fine performer. Like her peers, she understands the power of forthright gesture, the necessity of doing completely whatever she has in mind to do, and the appeal of facing the audience with frank, secure eyes. She works with a bold flatness of purpose: what you see is what you see. In *Chicken Soup*, a solo and the first of a series of dances gathered under the title *Food for Thought*, Cummings' opaque declarations add up to a shimmering summation of a life. That the bluntness of her personality and method should yield so modulated a portrait makes *Chicken Soup* a triumph—the most arresting solo to come around in a long while.

Chicken Soup, performed this winter at the Dance Theater Workshop, is a fond memory of black rural life. Although the solo is partitioned into episodes, it seems to glide from one focus to another. Its first central image is of conversation, of ladies gathered around a table in the soothing rhythms of talk. Cummings gesticulates as though talking, but the rhythm of her torso swaying frontward, then backward, is what really conveys the pleasure of conversation. Once in a while Cummings freezes in a spasm of pain, registering an unhappy turn in the conversation and, perhaps as well, the historical pain felt by black women. Yet however deeply those spasms are meant to plumb, they're cushioned in the warm, generous sway of Cummings' body. Life goes on.

After a short while into the dance, life goes on contrapuntally, which doesn't necessarily enhance life but certainly does wonders for a dance. On top of the swaying, Cummings adds small flickerings of her hands. This technique has often been exploited to approximate the effect of movement seen under strobe light. Cummings turns the stunt into a poetic device to convey a multitude of images—fans fluttering in the heat, tongues tripping over words, cicadas buzzing around those words. The contrast between her large rocking motions and the filigreed, rather nervous hand movements sets up the amplitude of the next episode. Cummings gets down on her hands and knees and scrubs the floor. In scrubbing with all her might, her labor becomes not a celebration of menial chores, but of strength and coordina-



SARAH WELLS

In *Food for Thought*, Blondell Cummings finds dignity in the commonplace.

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tion and willpower. Dignity resides in this woman.

Then begins the fun. As a recorded voice intones the recipe for chicken soup (supplied by the no-nonsense Settlement Cookbook), Cummings goes to work, stirring and shaking, doing all the things you do to make soup. Just as aroma wafts cooking out of the pot and into the house, so the aroma of Cummings' soup infiltrates her body. The motions it takes to fry chicken pieces in the skillet move into her bones. As a gentle percussion instrument pipes up, the cook shimmies softly, her pelvis replying to each shake of the skillet. Shades of Africa in the chicken soup? You bet, and it brings Cummings home free. Chicken soup, as we all know, is the staff of life. It is memory.

Several other dances on the *Food for Thought* program confirmed Cummings' outstanding talent for characterization, but did not extend that talent as thoughtfully. In the solo *Meat and Potatoes*, for example, her grasp of the construction worker on lunch break is well-nigh perfect; to see her peer gruffly into the stuff between the slices and then eat it anyway gets to the heart of lunch break: you eat lunch in order to have lunch. But this is a pretty thin base for a dance. When Cummings tries to broaden the base of her work by including other dancers in it, the result is feeble.

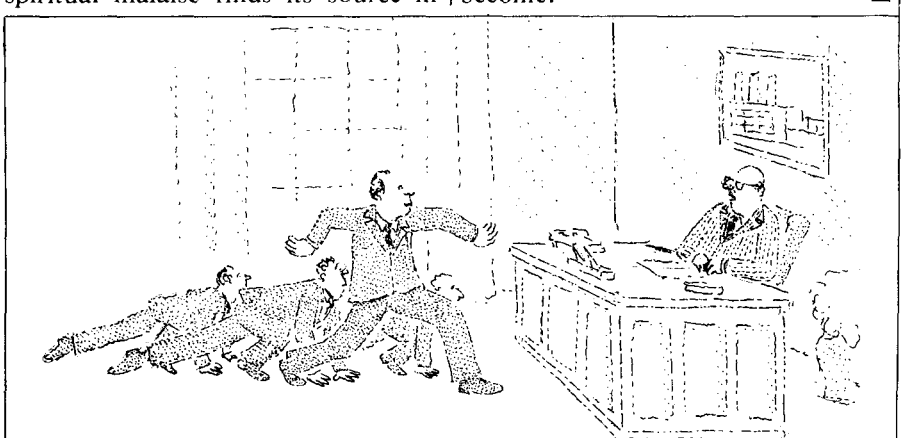
In response to the common criticism that soloists have too personal, too narrow, a method to be taken seriously, Cummings may feel that choreographing group dances legitimizes her. This criticism, which has even been applied to Isadora Duncan, is itself too narrow because it fails to acknowledge what is there. There in Blondell Cummings is a formidable personality. Though the space she occupies in dance is nookish, it is vivid.

Nor should the power of individual performance be underestimated in big ballets. A miracle happened during the Dance Theater of Harlem's winter season at the City Center. The company revived Agnes de Mille's *Fall River Legend*, and not only did this narrative about Lizzie Borden for once *not* put me to sleep, it was rousing. The explanation for this turnabout is Virginia Johnson, who plays Lizzie. Sidestepping the usual route of hysteria, Johnson interprets Lizzie as a Cinderella figure. She transforms the girl from a neurotic of the 1940s—the era in which ballet went on a pseudo-Freudian binge—into a nineteenth-century fairy tale heroine. Johnson showed us the girl's despair, all right, but she despaired sweetly. She even took up that wretched ax with gentle, articulate *ports de bras*. I was relieved to be able to root for the protagonist, and more relieved to find *Fall River Legend* divested of its presumptions of realism. The company played it correctly—as a "mellerdrama."

Why Dance Theater of Harlem chose to haul this turkey out of storage is beyond imagination, but if reason cannot be found, explanation can. *Fall River Legend* is one manifestation of the company's current thoughts on repertory. In its first decade DTH had a Balanchine wing, with a Balanchine-influenced subdivision by co-director Arthur Mitchell, and an "ethnic" wing of dances that glamorized the black heritage of many in the company. The ethnic wing is now a vestige, and the Balanchine ballets have become subsumed by classical ballet, which includes stagings of *Paquita* and Act II of *Swan Lake*. With generalization of definition comes diffusion of choreographic style and ossification of mind. The ballets that proceed from fifth position all get the same approach; they're performed as if they were multiplication tables. Naturally, spiritual malaise finds its source in the physical. The dancers don't work from fifth position as easily as they need to, and their inelasticity makes the ballets hard to swallow.

With the classical ballets served up as spinach, the company's most earnest pleasure-point has now switched to dramatic and *demi-caractère* works, which have been added to the repertory with astonishing speed. The question is whether the shift is by default or is meant to affirm the viability of a genre long out of vogue. If the latter, DTH's retrieval system is too indiscriminate to produce a convincing policy statement. Worthy material, such as Lichine's *Graduation Ball*, Nijinska's *Les Biches*, and Fokine's *Scheherazade*, is mixed with junk; of the worthy items, those whose style and theme are beyond the dancers' theatrical experience are mixed with ballets whose sense of period they can handle.

One doesn't know if DTH means to be a hurricane of experiment, trying everything on for size, if it is equally serious about its *Fall River Legends* and *Swan Lakes*, if it intends to be in perpetual search of identity, or is simply trying to locate the most suitable repertory for its dancers. DTH's experiments acknowledge the dancers' dramatic capabilities as fully as they acknowledge their technical insufficiencies. Yet that doesn't make the score even. A juicy *Fall River Legend* is no compensation for a bone-dry *Swan Lake* or *Concerto Barocco*. I, for one, read the triumph as a sign of defeat. The DTH dancers have not become the sophisticated ensemble they were charged, through their Balanchine repository, to become. ■



"Good work, Bevans, but in this business climate I've got to ask myself 'Is a choreography department absolutely essential?' "

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Carter Ratcliff

Biennial Grievances

Once upon a time, the Whitney Museum of American Art celebrated the arrival of spring with an exhibition drawn from the art season just past. The show was called the Whitney Annual. Excluded artists deplored the politics of it all. Artists tapped for the show tended to speak softly and wear a satisfied look on their faces—an expression that often faded when the next Annual came around. For years the polemics generated by these exhibitions were of a manageable intensity. Then came the late 1960s and the era of protest. The Whitney Annual became the target of relentless criticism. About ten years ago, opening night was invaded by women armed with whistles and other emblems of feminist outrage. By 1977, the museum decided it couldn't stand the heat, at least not year-in, year-out. It closed down the kitchen—not permanently, just for alternate seasons. The Annual became the Biennial. This has been a successful tactic. With so much happening in art these days, nationally and internationally, the art world is distracted. When the Biennial rolls around, interested parties find that their briefs against the Whitney's curatorial staff are not quite prepared. Grievances are felt but no one bothers to formulate them with much passion.

By 1977, the museum decided it couldn't stand the heat. . . .

A general feeling in New York was that the last Biennial was a perfunctory exercise in regional distribution. Out-of-town artists were selected chiefly on the basis of their mailing addresses, not on the strength of their work. Or so the complaint went. This time, out-of-towners will be upset that so much Manhattan art, from the most stylish New York gallery shows of 1981-83, has been recycled. Where work by non-New Yorkers appears it tends to reflect the trends of the art capital. Thus Chicagoan Kenneth Shorr layers oil-stick images over photographs in a manner that recalls rather too accurately the paint-on-canvas layerings of David Salle, who stands for many as the epitome of a young New York artist. Gone from this Biennial are the peculiarly Chicago-ish extravaganzas that filled so much of the last one. Gone, too, are the Southwestern and Californian

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Robert Longo's *Golden Children* have an enigmatic monumentality.

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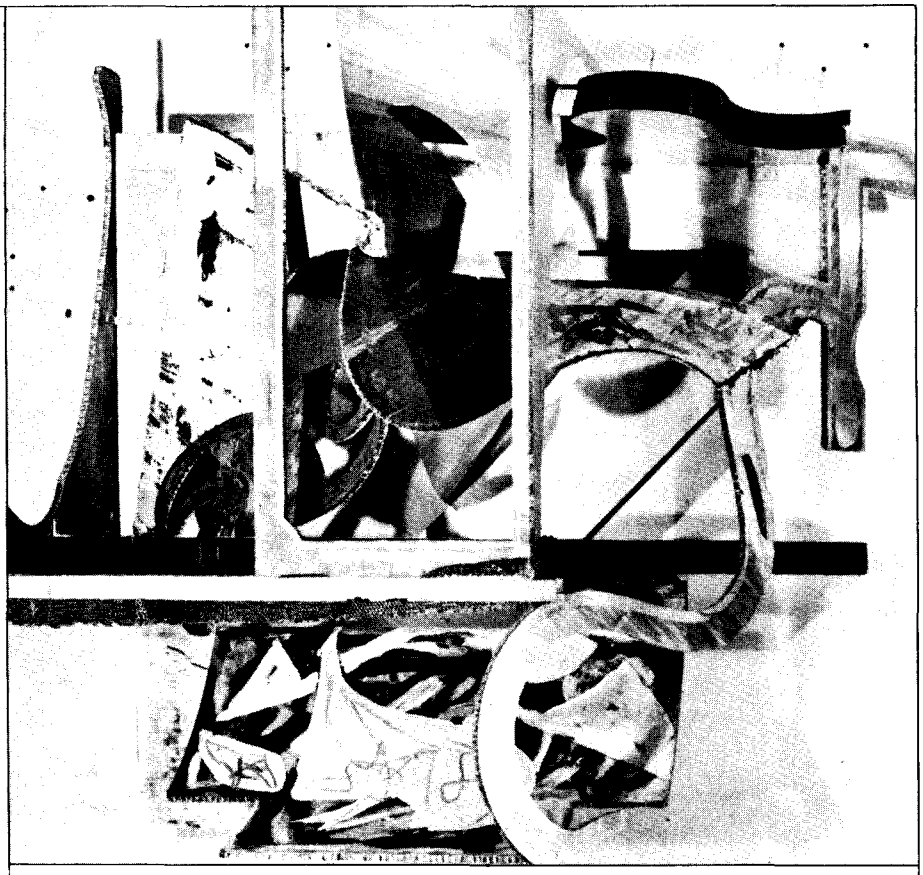
variations on the Windy City look.

Frank Stella is present and accounted for, with aluminum reliefs from the series he showed last winter in Soho. Richard Artschwager, some of whose older paintings are currently on view in the same neighborhood, has built a dazzlingly empty installation piece for the occasion of the Biennial. Other veterans on parade at the Whitney include Louise Bourgeois, Jasper Johns, and Robert Mangold, all represented by characteristic (one might say "trademark") images. The rage for graffiti brings Keith Haring's neat, clean cartoon figures and Jean-Michel Basquiat's elegantly messy ones. Joe Zucker, Robert Longo, Eric Fischl, Judy Rifka, Julian Schnabel—they're all on view, some of them hot, others sizzling. Each is a thoroughgoing Manhattanite. Yet it could be argued that this is not, at heart, a New York show. The younger artists, especially, belong to a development that leaps over regional boundaries, and national ones as well.

In Europe and in America, the liveliest new artists make paintings and sculptures from the images the media send sweeping through our world in an endless barrage. Echoes of the news, the movies, and advertising mingle with references to high art, modernist and traditional. Robert Longo's *Golden Children* are like billboard-sized snapshots. In the Whitney Biennial, as at Longo's recent show at Castelli's in New York, these loomingly intimate pictures flank a bronze relief of an automobile graveyard, which in its turn is topped by a red-lacquered sculpture of a man and a woman. She laughs, he turns away arrogantly. With their enigmatic monumentality, these figures offer mordant comment on the public imagery of any and all regimes, whether oppressive or ostensibly free. Like Sigmar Polke and Anselm Kiefer in Germany, and the Italians Francesco Clemente and Sandro Chia—not to mention the veteran English painter Malcolm Morley—Longo generates his meanings from a clash of references, styles, moods. This is a modernist tactic familiar ever since the Cubists invented collage. The ironies of Pop art, English and American, linger in the vicinity of this new work.



BRUCE C. JONES

Eastern Rand **by Frank Stella.**

Yet the range of reference and, with it, the potential for chaos is unprecedented. One gets the impression of sensibilities tuned to all the media simultaneously, and to all of the culture's visual history. Painting and sculpture made in this spirit cannot be considered specific to New York, nor to any European city. Chartered as a museum of American art, the Whitney is in no position to report in full on such developments. If it were simply the Whitney Museum of Art, some Germans could have been included, along with the Italians, the livelier British artists—perhaps even a Dane or two. And the Biennial could have been, for once, an accurate reflection of its moment. ■

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Right Hand Devil II **by Joe Zucker.**

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Judith Crist

Bergman's Rosetta Stone

"A declaration of love for life." *Fanny and Alexander,* Ingmar Bergman's new film, is that and more. Bergman adds that it is "the sum total of my life as a filmmaker," declaring it his last film in a career henceforth to be dedicated to theater. A charming, expansive, exhilarating film, it is a masterpiece.

In his forty-third feature as writer-director, the Swedish master comes out of his dark decades of intellectual despair and moral anguish into the light of humanism. The metaphysical probings, philosophical speculations, psychological analyses and, more recently, cold outrage at the cruelties and alienations of contemporary life have been set aside. Now Bergman has turned to his personal and professional past to provide a glorious, glowing celebration of human beings and of the sweet things in life. *Fanny and Alexander* is laced with comedy, spiced with the supernatural, and touched with survivable sorrows.

His story, which does not flag for a moment in its 195 minutes, is of a year in the life of a huge turn-of-the-century family, replete in its three generations with upstairs-downstairs characters, a villainous stepfather right out of Dickens, and a fairy godfather who is also the grandmother's erstwhile lover. Also on hand are ghosts and illusionists, a guardian angel, and even a magical mummy. Our introduction to the family is through the eyes of 10-year-old Alexander, bored with his toy theater, exploring his home, and setting the stage for us. His is a theater family whose dramas and comedies touch upon universal secrets.

It is Christmas Eve in 1907 in a small industrial city (Bergman returned to his native Uppsala to film) and the Ekdahls are preparing for their various celebrations. The widowed matriarch, Helena, a former actress, has handed over the operation of their local theater to her eldest son, Oscar, and his wife, Emilie, as actor-managers. With their two children, Alexander and his younger sister, Fanny, the couple has an apartment within Helena's vast and luxurious domain. As on other family occasions, the house also accommodates Helena's youngest son, Gustav, an enthusiastic wencher, his very pleasingly plump wife, Alma, and their two daughters. The middle son, Carl, a ne'er-do-well given to drink, self-pity, and cruelty to his cow-like German wife, Lydia, lives in an apartment below. After a pageant at the theater, followed by a traditional wassail for the company, the huge family celebration begins. It includes friends and servants, with endless eating and drinking and exchanges of gifts, and a snake dance through the apartments, all aglow with candles and decorations.

Pernilla Allwin and Bertil Guve in *Fanny and Alexander.*

As the evening unfolds, we see Alexander treating Fanny and their cousins to an illicit magic-lantern show in the nursery, where paraffin lamps are forbidden; Carl being carried home in a drunken stupor after delighting the youngsters with a scatological version of "fireworks"; Gustav having his way with the luscious young nursery-maid, Maj; and Helena settling down in the sitting room for another of her "monologues" with Isak Jacobi, the family's "Uncle Isak," a Jewish moneylender and antique dealer. He is her confidant; their pragmatic exchanges are warmed by past passion and present tenderness: she is his "lovely Helena," and he is still her "sweet lover—sweet like strawberries." We are back in the worlds of *Wild Strawberries,* of *Smiles of a Summer Night.*

Bergman soon changes the atmosphere to that of *The Magician* and *Winter Light.* Oscar is stricken while rehearsing as the Ghost in *Hamlet* and dies. Bishop Vergerus, a handsome, stern pastor, comforts and woos Emilie. They are married, despite the family's objection, and she and the children move to the Bishop's "palace," a stark fifteenth-century dwelling they share with his mother, sister, and bedridden aunt. The Bishop demands they take up his life of austerity, rejecting all possessions including "friends, habits, and thoughts." Before long the three are virtual prisoners, with Alexander, who has to reckon with his father's ghost, the principal victim. Although his mother has warned him not to "play Hamlet," Alexander's hatred is clear to the oppressive Bishop, who attributes his calm and calculated cruelties to his "love," which he boasts is "strong and harsh."

The travails of Emilie and her children are counterpointed with the

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Ewa Froling as Emilie Ekdahl and Jan Malmsjo as Bishop Vergerus.

Ekdahls' charmed lives in the white-and-pink settings and sunlit bustle of their summer country house. How the family and Uncle Isak come to the rescue makes for the ultimate mystery and magic in which Bergman clothes his tale. Alexander learns that ghosts and madmen are to be met on equal terms; wishes and thoughts can, for good or evil, take form, and childhood's haunting doesn't end with old age.

Gustav's "curtain speech" is a plea that we in our "little worlds" take our pleasures without shame and "be happy while we are happy." The fade-out is of Helena seated, stroking Alexander's head, reading from a Strindberg play that may signal her and Emilie's return to the stage: "Anything can happen, anything is possible and likely. Time and space do not exist. On a flimsy ground of reality imagination spins and weaves new patterns. . . ."

Once again Bergman's cinematographer is the great Sven Nykvist, whose camera feasts upon the faces, the settings, and the seasons. Marik Vos, who designed the costumes for *Cries and Whispers,* has dressed the company to stunning effect, and the sets are breathtaking. But it is the cast, drawn largely from the theater, that brings Bergman's broad tapestry to teeming life. Bergman's empathy with children, understated in *The Magic Flute,* is clear; Bertil Guve's Alexander bursts with the fantasies, angers, and affections of the young, and Pernilla Allwin's Fanny is the peaches-and-cream embodiment of stolid loyalty. Gunn Wallgren's Helena is an elderly enchantress, her dignity as appealing as her vulnerability; Ewa Froling's Emilie brings a girl of gaiety and charm to spirited womanliness. Bergman, as ever, loves his women. And there are the more familiar Bergman faces: Harriet Andersson, the lovely young leading lady of the early 1950s and the unforgettable dying Agnes of *Cries and Whispers,* is the ultimate slattern as the Bishop's treacherous kitchen maid; Erland Josephson, exotic and sweet, is Uncle Isak, and Gunnar Bjornstrand plays a senior member of the acting company.

The film serves as a Rosetta stone for Bergman's life as well as his work, from his own suffering at the hands of his father, a stern Lutheran pastor, to his childhood obsession with the theater and his adult experiences there. But I leave it to the academics to trace the repetitions of certain character names, the symbols that may in fact symbolize nothing, the touch of *Parsifal* here, of social significance there. This is a film to revel in for its joy, its warmth, its breadth of mind, and its depth of feeling. Like Fellini's *Amarcord,* Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* is not only the sum total of a career; it encompasses and refreshes our lives.

A second Swedish film is more than noteworthy. From Jan Troell, who made his mark here with *The Emigrants* and *The New Land,* we have *The Flight of the Eagle,* the story of the ill-fated hydrogen-balloon expedition to the North Pole led by Salomon August Andrée in 1897. Against the advice of other scientists, Andrée and two companions, spurred by nationalism, fanaticism, and personal pride and financed in part by King Oscar II and Alfred Nobel, set off to claim the Pole for Sweden. They vanished. Thirty-three years later the crew of a Norwegian freighter found their remains and their camp. Among the findings were journals and thirty-four undeveloped and preserved photographs of the expedition taken by Nils Strindberg.

Troell's film, based on a 1967 "documentary novel" derived from the journals by Per Olaf Sundman, details the planning and preparations for the flight, which ended after three days, and describes the huge balloon's collapse on an icefield, the trio's subsequent three-month trek through the Arctic wilderness, and their arrival at White Island, where they perished. For sheer visual spectacle, with the original black-and-white photographs bursting into life, the film is remarkable. With the benefit of an excellent cast—Max von Sydow as Andrée, Göran Stangertz as Strindberg, and Sverre Anker Ousdal as Knut Fraenkel—the film stands as both a breathtaking account of man battling the elements and a perceptive character study of men under ultimate stress.

Von Sydow gives one of his finest performances as the coldblooded near-fanatic who comes to the devastating realization that he has victimized himself. Stangertz's Strindberg, a young physicist mesmerized by the others' enthusiasm, is balanced by Ousdal's Fraenkel, an adventurer with nothing to lose. We learn of the men's attachments and private lives in the prelude to the flight and in flashbacks during their trek. The primary focus is on where, beyond shared dreams of glory and immortality, true comradeship lies. ■

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Poets, Pubs, and Private Eyes

One of the Half-Dozen

There will not be a better book of poetry this year than *The Complete Poems 1927-1979* by Elizabeth Bishop. Miss Bishop, who died three years ago at 68, was one of the half-dozen contemporary poets right up there with Robert Lowell and Theodore Roethke. The book, published by Farrar Straus and Giroux at $17.50, is not particularly long—she wasn't a prolific poet—but each poem is a celebration, or a cause for celebration. She was commonsensical, sensitive, humorous, masterly. I would like to print *Manners,* or her anthology poem, *The Fish,* but they're too long for my space. Instead, a short one—her shortest, in fact, *Casabianca,* which has always intrigued me:

Love's the boy stood on the burning deck
trying to recite "The boy stood on
the burning deck." Love's the son
  stood stammering elocution
  while the poor ship in flames went down.

Love's the obstinate boy, the ship,
even the swimming sailors, who
would like a schoolroom platform, too,
  or an excuse to stay
  on deck. And love's the burning boy.

Two Roberts

When Ellen Terry met Robert Browning she remarked that she found the man more incomprehensible than his poetry. That's saying something. In *Robert Browning: A Life Within a Life* by Donald Thomas (Viking, $18.75) we have a straightforward, no-frills biography. As with any biography of Browning, it is also a biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the delicate, tubercular poet with whom he eloped in 1846, he 34 and she six years older—both of them virgins, so far as can be determined. The poetic couple lived in Italy until her death fifteen years later. Her poetry was always much more popular than his, which was generally obscure and overloaded with ideas. He returned to England after her death, and finally became famous through his *The Ring and the Book,* a massive poem of 21,000 lines. Except for his simpler lyrics and some dramatic monologues, he is all but unreadable today, but as with all great men he's readable *about.*

Another Robert you'd hesitate to call Bob is the centerpiece of *Robert Graves* by Martin Seymour-Smith (Holt Rinehart & Winston, $22.50). Graves is now 85, and pretty much out of things, but he's had a full and adventurous life. He knew from age 15 that he was going to be a poet. Upon graduation from public school his headmaster said to him, "Well, goodbye, Graves, and remember that your best friend is the waste-paper basket," always good advice to a writer. He was severely wounded, in fact reported dead, in World War I, about which he wrote a fascinating early autobiography, *Goodbye to All That.* He married a man-hating, sex-hating woman by whom he managed to have four children. Then followed one of the zaniest episodes in literary history when he became involved for years with the poet Laura Riding, living a ménage à trois, which led to Riding's jumping out a fourth-story window. Nothing loath, Graves ran down a flight and jumped out the third story. When all this settled, Graves married a second time, and this time it took, although he always had to have a second woman around: a Muse, a goddess. He had four more children, and wrote many books, including *I, Claudius,* which he regarded as a potboiler. He is truly a man of letters and this is a well-written biography, full of incident and gossip, albeit a bit pussyfooting, the principals still alive, and the author a friend of the subject.

Soup to Nuts

There aren't many all-embracing reference books in English on the major subject of food. The two I've always consulted are *The Food of the Western World* by Theodora Fitzgibbon (Times Books, $25) and the classic *A Concise Encyclopedia of Gastronomy* by André Simon, which has just been reissued in paper by Overlook Press at $11.95. The former, needless to say, is restricted to the Western world, and the latter, which is charming reading, has a difficult and diffuse index. Now there's a new book, *The World Encyclopedia of Food* by L. Patrick Coyle, Jr. (Facts on File, $40). It runs in alphabetical order from abalone to zucchini, covering edibles and potables, with sections on "The Nutritive Values of Foods" (42 pages) and "Sodium Contents of Foods" (18 pages). Great fun to dip into: if your child tires of caring for the guinea pigs, let it be known that they are best prepared like chicken or rabbit; a three-pound shrimp was once taken in a Texas river; the Chinese eat dog and one of their favorite breeds for eating is chow (could that be how the slang came about?). Seven hundred and ninety large pages, good index, many photos and drawings. Encyclopedic as it is, there's something missing: *dim sum,* which I love. You can find out how to make these little nuggets of Chinese goodness in *The Dim Sum Book* by Eileen Yin-Fei Lo, with how-to illustrations by Lauren Jarrett (Crown, $14.95). After you've learned, ask me to lunch.

Wit and Action

Elmore Leonard must be sick to death of being compared to Hammett

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and Chandler. But there it is: wit, action, tough dialogue. Reviewer's rule number one: never give the plot away, especially that of *Stick* by Leonard (Arbor House, $13.95), because it's beautifully complicated. "Stick" is ex-con Ernest Stickley, Jr., who looks like "a dustbowl farmer turned hobo" and who finds himself in Miami, trying to go straight. To do this he has to bend things a little, and he gets mixed up with dope dealers and a high-finance stock juggler, who makes deal after deal on the phone from the back seat of his limo:

"You got to keep it working," Barry said, punching a number on the phone system. "We sleep, you and I, right? But money never sleeps, man. I play golf on the weekend, the money's still working its ass off. Work work work. . . ."

And the characters are *tough*. Take Cecil: "You did not talk to the Cecils of the world drunk; you threw a net over them if you had one." Stick can handle him. But can he take on three sexy women, *seriatim,* in one evening? More sex than you'll find in Hammett or Chandler. As my friend, Pyke Johnson, Jr., wrote in a recent poem:

This book has sex enough:
Not over-much, but plenty.
It isn't hard or soft-core porn,
But, rather, it's *al dente.*

Favorite Abodes

It's not snobbism, but I don't like bars in the States: first off, that terrible American beer, then the price of the booze, then that huge color TV beating away at you. But in Ireland, pubs are my chief abodes. So, for many reasons I loved *Ireland's Pubs* by Sybil Taylor, a Penguin paper original selling for a mere $6.95. Miss Taylor is an American Europhile who did all the pleasant research herself. A beautiful woman, she warns of the "Irish lep":

This is not a shortened version of "Leprechaun," but a form of brief, intense courtship crowned with a swift pounce-and-grapple. The "lepee" is free to go on with it or to laugh it all away, as laughter is the universal oil for any type of Irish trouble.

In her book, which is a guide, a history, and an anthology (Yeats, Frank O'Connor, Hugh Leonard), she *stravages* all over Ireland, north and south, dropping in on all manner of pubs, sampling here a nip of Bushmills, there a half-pint of Guinness:

A lot of the skill involved in pulling the perfect pint is instinctive and unconscious; the barman must have an eye for the way the beer behaves, a feeling for the treatment of it. . . . His care for his taps and his lines, and his understanding of his product, create a classic drink—dark, smooth, and satisfying.

Miss Taylor, by the way, is not particularly a drinking woman; no need to overdo that in Ireland: the pub-grub is frequently first rate, the atmosphere grand, and the crack (partying and talk) the best in the world. This is a book you must have if you're going there. Oh, yes, and if you're going to the continent, you should have *The Mermaids of Chenoceaux and 828 Other Stories* by Phyllis Méras (Congdon & Weed, $16.95), a sort of guide-by-anecdote to towns, castles, statuary—like having a traveling companion with a well-stocked mind.

A Bible for Biblionuts

If you are a biblionut, as I am, there's a recent paperback that you *must have.* Pick up *Good Books* by Steven Gilbar (Ticknor & Fields, $9.95). It's simply short, paragraph descriptions of a couple of thousand books, arranged by subject. F'rinstance, if you want to know if there are any good books about, or set in, Philadelphia, there are ten, fiction and nonfiction. Or under "Labor Organizations," five. Or "Ambition," ten, including *What Makes Sammy Run?* and *Macbeth.* My test for such a guidebook is whether or not it includes my favorites. I check: yes, *What the Woman Lived,* the letters of Louise Bogan, is in. And, yes, it lists Joseph Mitchell's *Old Mr. Flood.* And there are Donald Hall's *String Too Short to Be Saved,* and Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise to Candleford,* and Ignazio Silone's *Bread and Wine.* And *Kilvert's Diary,* here misprinted as *"Klivert's Diary,"* which is pretty silly. The book is riddled with misprints, as is the index. Under "B. Gill" we find four page references, but it turns out that one is for Brendan Gill and one for Bartholomew Gill, both decidedly worthy, but two different fellows. And there are no Gills whatsoever on two of the pages noted. My checking finds that one of the best books I've read is missing: *Enid Bagnold's Autobiography.* Next edition, please.

Vegas

The next time I play poker I'm going to suggest a round of Hold 'em, a variety of seven card stud favored by the top players "which is to stud and draw what chess is to checkers." I'll probably be sorry afterwards, but I'll put the blame on *The Biggest Game in Town* by the English writer A. Alvarez (Houghton Mifflin, $13.95). The town is Las Vegas, of which he says, "The casinos lie out there on the baked earth like extravagant toys discarded on a beach, their signs looping, beckoning, spiraling, and fizzing recklessly, as in that moment of glory just before the batteries run down." The players, "mostly middle-aged and overweight, with sallow, pouchy faces, bloodshot eyes, nicotine-stained fingers, five-o'clock shadow," are obsessed gamblers, most of whom are top players in their home towns who come to Vegas "to test their skills, like tennis players converging on Wimbledon. Nearly all of them go home broke." Alvarez concentrates on a half-dozen professional players, and the climax of his informative book is the great yearly event, Binyon's World Series of Poker, in which the winner walks off with $375,000.

Read and Admired

Here are a handful of books I've read since the last time around that I recommend, should your interests lie in these areas. *How to Be Your Own Literary Agent* by Richard Curtis (Houghton Mifflin, $12.95) would better have been titled *Why You Should Have Me as Your Literary Agent.* All about submissions, contracts, rights, and how to outfox those wily publishers (who'll win at the game no matter what). . . . In *Fat Man on a Bicycle* by Tom Vernon (Michael Joseph, $14.95) we have a BBC broadcaster who is as jolly as a fat man (nineteen stone) should be, taking an 866-mile bike ride from London to the Mediterranean. Despite English prejudices against the French—"viz: that they eat frog's

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TRADE WINDS

legs, are naughty, talk too fast and smell of garlic''—he's a thorough Francophile, showing, as he titles one of his chapters, ''A Sancerre Enthusiasm''. . . . Two years ago a small publisher, Apple-Wood, had a hit with *The Brand-X Anthology of Poetry,* a book of parodies, and now they're back with *The Brand-X Anthology of Fiction,* $17.95 hard, $11.95 paper, and worth either price, if only for Stephen Leacock's spoof of Sherlock Holmes: ''She strode imperiously into the room. She seized a chair imperiously and seated herself on it, imperial side up.'' Also good: George Plimpton sniping at Truman Capote, and a lot of Benchley, Wolcott Gibbs, and Peter De Vries. Oh, yes, edited by William Zaranka, whose comments are a bit forced-funny; but the anthologies are so good, he's to be forgiven. . . .

''I have been campaigning to have the national Thanksgiving dish changed from turkey to spaghetti carbonara.'' So begins Calvin Trillin's *Third Helpings* (Ticknor & Fields, $12.95), the continuing saga of a man in love with his taste buds that began with *Alice, Let's Eat,* then *American Fried.* This gourmet of the grungy can be very funny, indeed: ''goose intestines are the kind of thing that makes me suspect that those Chinese waiters were correct a number of times when they said, 'You no like.' ''. . .

Ezra Pound spent the last few years of his life in Venice, refusing to speak except in monosyllables. The cultural journalist Alan Levy spent four days with him there in 1971 and wrote an article about the meeting for *The New York Times Magazine.* This has now been expanded, with a section of quotes about and from Pound and a bibliography, into *Ezra Pound: The Voice of Silence* (paper, $9.95, The Permanent Press). Hemingway, William Carlos Williams, Louise Bogan—quite a group to quote, with many insights into the life and work of this man, half-genius, half-fool. A quote from the genius half: ''Willingness to experiment is not enough, but unwillingness to experiment is mere death.'' ■

''I have scuffed my feet across the rug, and I'm armed with a static charge. Hand over all your money or I'll touch your nose.''

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Gregory Sandow

At a Loss for Words

What's gone wrong with the booklets that come with opera recordings? At one time they gave us the singers' biographies. Now they often don't. So here's a new *Barber of Seville* from CBS (I3M 37862, three discs). The Rosina is Marilyn Horne, whom we all know. Her Almaviva, though, is a well-meaning but somewhat labored new tenor named Paolo Barbacini, and we're stuck. Who *is* he?

What is in the booklet? The libretto, of course. And on the back cover, pictures of, as they put it (with quaint capitalization), "various interpreters of the Opera." Captions tell us the interpreters' names—Maria Malibran, Elvira de Hidalgo, Luigi Zamboni. But what good are names when we're not told when these artists lived, or how they sang? Then there's an essay called "The Critical Edition." Why is it there? Presumably because the critical edition, Rossini's uncorrupted text, is what we hear on the recording—but nowhere does the booklet actually say so.

The booklet that comes with the new *Tristan und Isolde* conducted by Carlos Kleiber (Deutsche Grammophon 2741 006, five discs) doesn't tell us that Margaret Price learned *Isolde* only because Kleiber begged her, and would never sing so heavy a role on stage; that Anton Dermota is a venerable Viennese artist, now 70, who came out of retirement (or so I'd guess) to sing the small role of the Shepherd; or even that Kleiber has in effect made his own critical edition, so when Price or Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau sing what sound like wrong notes, they're simply following Wagner's manuscript on Kleiber's orders, rather than the printed score.

The libretto in RCA's booklet for *Die Zauberflöte* (CTC4-4124, four discs) tells us that where we'd expect offstage voices in Act II we're actually hearing the conductor, James Levine, and the director, identified only as "Ponnelle." What's going on? The recording—RCA says so on the cover, but it's easy to miss—is taken from a famous Salzburg stage production. The director, as the cover doesn't say, was Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, whose joke it was to block Papageno's escape by coming on stage himself while Levine shouted at the singer from the pit. London, meanwhile, gives us a libretto for Georg Solti's new *Nozze di Figaro* (LDR 74001, four discs) that was originally printed for a 1979 recording conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Karajan made cuts Solti doesn't, and in the third act reversed, on musicological advice, the order of "Dove sono" and the sextet, which Solti leaves as they are. London will print a new booklet after they've sold all the old ones, but for now we're getting a libretto that doesn't match what we hear.

What about the records? *Tristan* is frightening (more later). In *Die Zauberflöte,* Ileana Cotrubas as Pamina giggles when Papageno (Christian Boesch) wonders why the hands and feet on her body aren't on her portrait. Or is she giggling as Ileana? The performance is *real,* so much so that you won't mind that Martti Talvela is a coarse Sarastro, and that Levine's conducting has character and conviction (theatrical virtues) rather than lightness and grace (musical virtues). You won't even mind that Ponnelle wouldn't shorten the spoken dialogue either on stage or on records, and that as a result you're paying for four discs instead of the usual three. *Figaro?* Solti makes it fussy and slick; the recording wouldn't be worth hearing even once except that Frederica von Stade is so abandoned as Cherubino and Thomas Allen is so virile yet so vulnerable as the Count. The CBS *Barber* is tidy and trim, at best—which wouldn't be good enough even if Marilyn Horne didn't sink the performance by turning Rosina's music into a demonstration of nineteenth-century vocal kitsch, all the more smarmy because it's so graceless.

What else is around? Two alternatives to the relatively dry Wagner recordings of Pierre Boulez and Marek Janowski: the *Ring* as sung (or more often bellowed) at Bayreuth in 1958, conducted sometimes clumsily, but always with sweeping power and at times even radiant joy, by Hans Knappertsbusch (Melodram 586, 587, 588, and 589, seventeen discs in all, recorded in live performance); and *Das Liebesverbot,* the more or less Italianate comedy that the 22-year-old Wagner based on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and later called "horrifying, atrocious, revolting," though "rawboned and charming" would have been more accurate (Melodram 224, three discs, also from live performance). The libretto of the second doesn't match what's on the records and is in German only. The booklet doesn't say where the performance took place, what roles the singers play or even what their first names might be, and doesn't warn us that side six contains, God knows why, a scene from the first act of *Siegfried.*

Has anything come out lately that I really love? There's Donizetti's long-forgotten *Maria di Rudenz*—even though, as newly released on yet another live-performance recording, it's hot, shrill, and raw, with a conductor who sings as loudly as the cast, and a libretto (here we go again) so different from what's on the records that at times you won't know where

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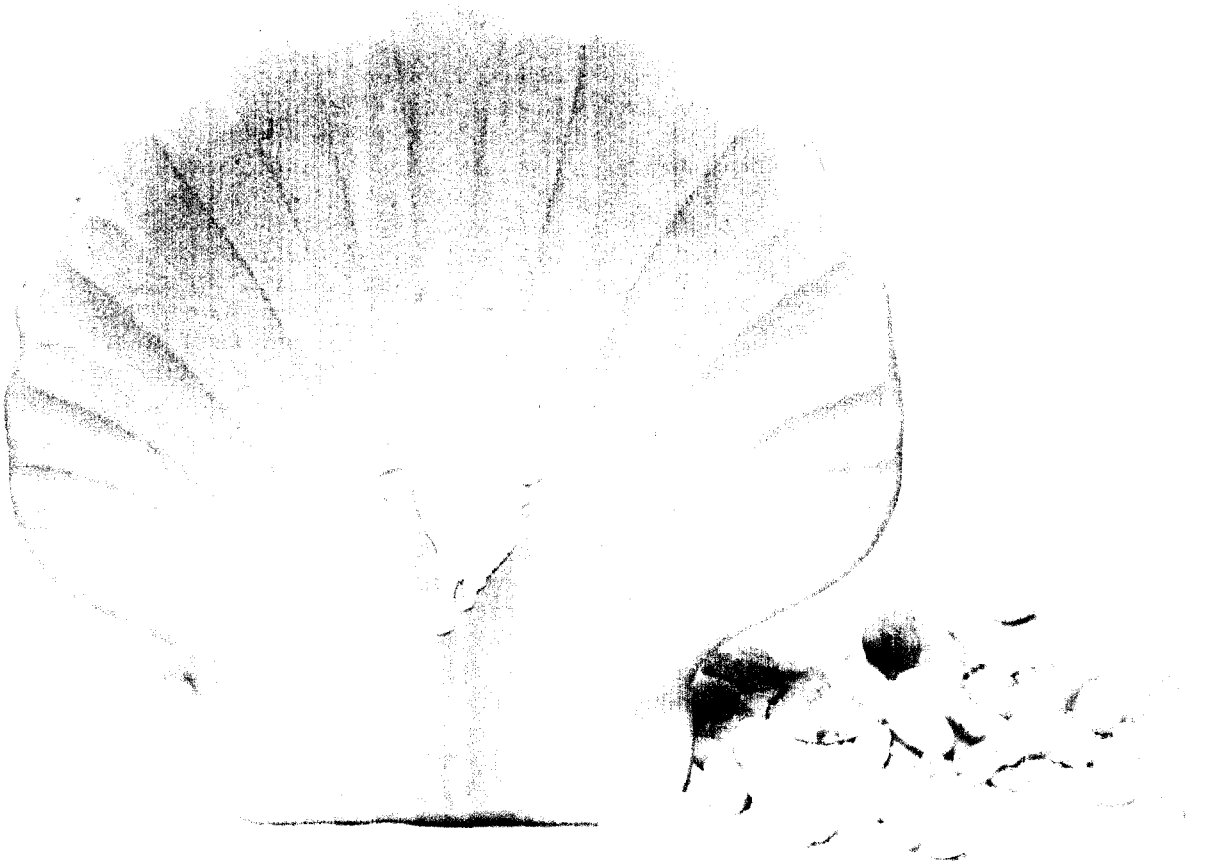
A Wedgwood treasure that recalls Botticelli's greatest masterpiece.



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you are (CBS M3 36948, three discs). The morbid story—abandoned woman lurks in catacombs, bleeding to death and plotting revenge—turns the music, when it's not robust or improbably cheerful, the uneasy color of a bruise on delicate flesh. The singing of stars and unknowns alike brings back the rough but genuinely dramatic style of the 1950s, in which anything goes as long as it's passionate.

Handel's *Partenope* (Pro Arte 4PAL-4000, four discs) is for tastes that are far more refined; yet it was popular entertainment in its day, with a plot about rulers who mope like adolescents in a soap opera, all of it meant to be . . . well, not funny, quite, but zany (which of course makes a quaint style even quainter). The performance sweeps by like a cheerful gale, or sometimes like a wistful breeze, played on instruments of Handel's time by La Petite Bande, a Flemish group conducted by Sigiswald Kuijken, a master (to paraphrase a famous remark of Schönberg's) not of *Baroque* style, but of Baroque *style.* The libretto is a reproduction of one used in Handel's day, with a translation more faithful to the charm of the original than any modern one could be; but why does an essay in the booklet talk about a German text included only with the recording's original issue in Germany?

Everyone will love Hungaroton's *Madama Butterfly* (SPLX 12256-58, three discs); but wait, *Butterfly* with a Hungarian cast (except for Peter Dvorsky, a Czech Pinkerton)? Yes, because as Italian opera moves further from its roots, big-name stars play their reputations as much as their roles—but not in Hungary, where in recording after recording less-than-star singers find life where their international counterparts mostly find larger-than-life routine. This *Butterfly* is good even for Hungary, because Veronika Kincses, heartrending and above all serious in the title role, and Giuseppe Patane, who conducts with an unheard-of combination of delicacy and traditional Italian thrust, are in their unpretentious way far better than artists ten times as famous. You should also hear Verdi's *Ernani* (SLPD 12259-61) and Rossini's *Mose* (SLPX 12290-92), less well-sung than competing recordings of the same operas, but far more believable.

Tristan, finally, is the one record I'd keep, I think, if I had to give all but one of my records away. Kleiber pushes the opera faster than I'm sure it's ever gone, faster in fact than his carefully chosen cast can sing; he puts dismaying fade-outs—only he could have had such a crazy idea—at the end of nearly every side. But the Dresden Staatskapelle plays for him weightlessly, without effort or hesitation even at the fastest speeds, and with passion and concentration that go so far beyond blind obedience that you'd think each player knew the meaning of every note as singers know the meaning of every word. Quiet music is hushed, almost breathless; climaxes are literally shattering. You must listen to these records without interruption if you want the full force of Kleiber's performance, and without the distraction of a score if you're a musician. The opera sounds so spare, so simple, so much lighter than the Wagner we've usually heard, and yet (unlike Boulez's or Janowski's) so uncompromising and so absolutely *true,* that I listened shaking, as if I'd never heard it before, as if its story of death through love were as real as a close friend's bitterest pain. The recorded sound is harsh and metallic, and the cast nearly irrelevant against Kleiber's orchestra. None of that matters. This performance is as close as I think I'll ever get to the core of *Tristan*—and that's frightening. ■

JAZZ BRIEFS

Billie Holliday: ***1942-1951-1954***
Capitol 2C068-86527

DESIGNED TO "FILL the gaps in 'Lady Day's' career," these overlooked sessions are a true find.

Side 1 covers the three sessions in chronological order, beginning with Holliday's 1942 rendition of "Traveling Light" with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. Three selections follow from her 1951 stint with the Tiny Grimes Sextet. The songs, "Blue Turning Grey Over You," "Rocky Mountain Blues," and "Be Fair to Me My Baby," amply demonstrate Holliday's range during this period of her life, as well as the considerable skills of Grimes' combo. The best of the three is "Rocky Mountain Blues," with its happy merger of swing, bop, and rhythm and blues idioms.

From this point on—the rest of side 1 and all of side 2—we join Holliday with an all-star cast in her first European tour at a live date in Cologne, Germany. Leonard Feather, the tour organizer, does the bilingual introduction. The album includes Holliday standards such as "My Man," "Blue Moon," and "All of Me."

This is one reissue that does what it set out to do. Don't pass it up.

—JONATHAN W. POSES

Zoot Sims, Joe Pass: ***Blues for 2***
Pablo D2310879

GUITARIST PASS SAYS this album was recorded on a rainy day. Maybe that contributed to the subdued mood of all eight compositions on *Blues for 2,* but it certainly didn't reduce the coloration.

Although one does not expect excitement from such over-recorded standards as "Pennies From Heaven" and Irving Berlin's "Remember," Pass' moving, syncopated solos keep the pieces fresh. Since Sims is comfortable on any reed instrument, from tenor to soprano saxophone, the variety of sounds these post-bop stylists can create seems limitless. At times Sims sounds like Lester Young, at times like Coleman Hawkins. He even manages to get a nice clarinet tone from the tenor sax in the Dixieland-flavored "Pennies."

There is only one original composition on the album, the co-written "Take Off." It just might be the best piece; certainly it is among the most interesting. Distinctively bop-oriented, it opens with a Sims solo which is joined by Pass' rhythm guitar. At midpoint the two switch, and Pass gets a chance to shine. Just four minutes long, "Take Off" generates enough movement from Pass and Sims to give the illusion of bass and drum parts. *Blues for 2* is a quiet, introspective, rainy-day album.

—JONATHAN W. POSES

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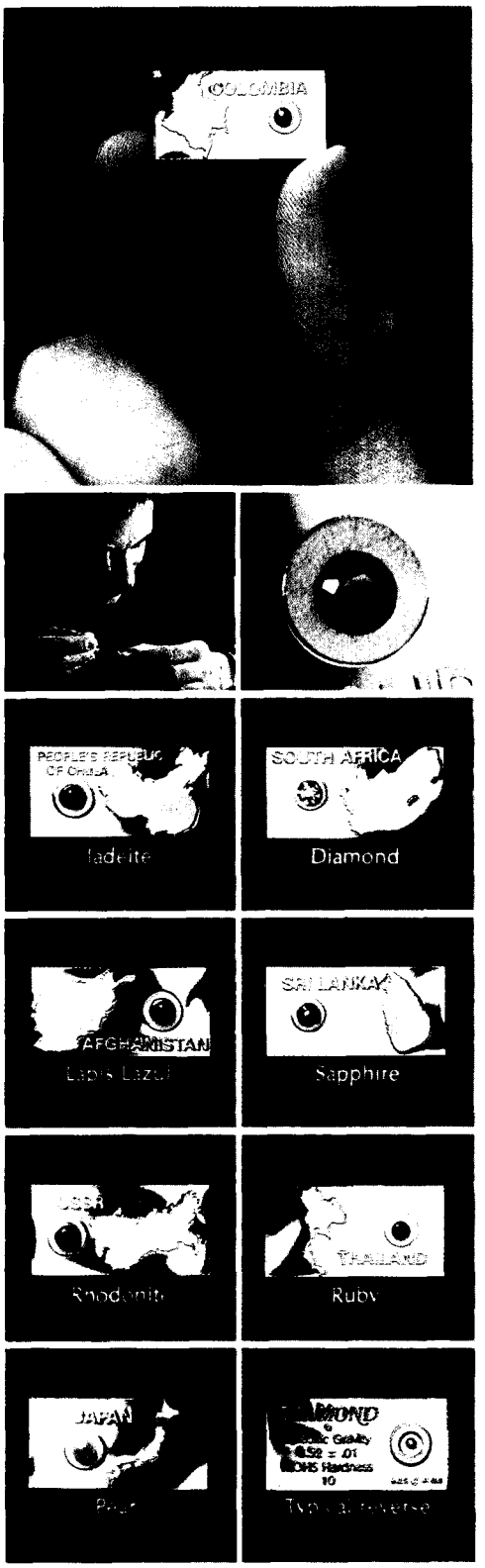

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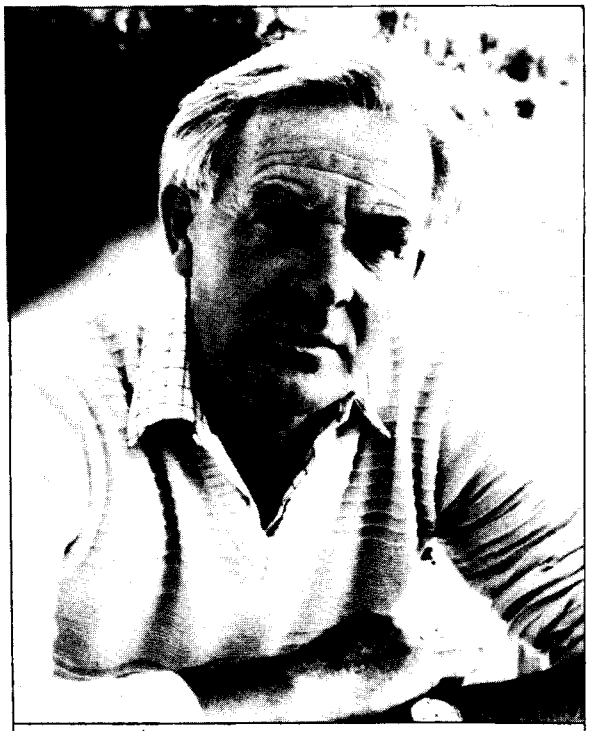
BOOKS

Technicolor Plot, Pallid Characters

The Little Drummer Girl
by John le Carré, Alfred A. Knopf, 430 pp., $15.95
Reviewed by Speer Morgan

STEPHEN CORNWELL



Le Carré's latest: "unnerving smoothness."

JOHN LE CARRÉ may have grown tired of how pitifully the British secret service has been shown up in recent years: the drama of the secret service falters when the real guys are discovered to have been walking out the doors with the files, one after another, for thirty years. The agents in the United States at least defect to Simon & Schuster and get rich; in England they appear to slog on, in endless subservience to their pink romances at Cambridge. *The Little Drummer Girl* strikes out for a new frontier of espionage. Its parties, Jews and Palestinians, are under a present threat, in a fight for their lives, far from the dusty sighs and counter-sighs of George Smiley's saturnine crew. The Israeli secret service is one of the most effective in the world, and a writer interested in espionage naturally would turn there for renewed inspiration. The result is a book that in some ways is less than vintage le Carré but still is much better than most best-selling fiction.

The Little Drummer Girl describes the conscription of a Gentile English actress into an Israeli operation that has the purpose of killing a Palestinian terrorist working in Europe. Charlie is English, in her thirties, has a history of affiliation with radical causes and, while able to play headline roles in small productions, has never made it big in the theater. She is the "lamb" which the Israeli operation seeks to train and tether as the ideal bait for the secretive Khalil, a bomber and the central coordinator of the war against the Jews of the Diaspora.

The Israeli agent in charge is Kurtz, who is different from the George Smiley of le Carré's previous books in a number of ways: he's warm, extroverted, theatrical, and capable of putting up with almost any kind of obnoxious behavior so long as he gets his way—which he almost always does. He is the patriarch of a small family of younger agents and the unquestioned authority among them, directing them virtually with the freedom of an agent behind enemy lines in a hot war, rather than one under the sometimes maddeningly strict controls that were over Smiley's peacetime operations. Kurtz's dealings with his superior back in Israel are more like family squabbles than policy disagreements, and the issue is always the same: he wants continued freedom, more time, and more resources to carry forward his elaborate plan. Kurtz's crew enjoys powerful contacts made through Jews all over the world—an advantage its Palestinian opponents bitterly resent.

This book is in technicolor rather than the quiet black-and-white of le Carré's earlier novels. Many of the same storytelling virtues are there: a sense of the tale always unfolding with a secret direction, as if (to use a phrase from the book) one were riding down a curvy highway toward some unknown destination; fine cameo portraits of strong and colorful characters; scenes which stand on their own dramatically as well as carry forward the rest of the story; and a superb sense of setting, particularly in Greece, Lebanon, and various spots around England.

With such a breath of fresh air, how can this book be less than vintage le Carré? To answer that we must make clear on what grounds the judgment is being made: whether as a "mere thriller" whose purpose is diversion, or as a novel to be compared with the best in fiction. It is le Carré's fault that such questions arise. They arise because he has already written at least three novels that are a good deal beyond the "mere thriller."

A work in a "lower" genre often comes to be remembered for as long as what snooty contemporaries identify as "higher" works: witness Chaucer's use of English instead of Latin, Shakespeare's plays which appealed to the rabble as well as the gentry, and Chekhov's newspaper fillers which, as he was surprised to learn, were fine examples of a new literary form, the short story. The history of literature, and of all art, is replete with examples of the popular tastes and types of the day becoming the "serious art" of later years.

Thus, phrases such as "mere thriller" or "genre level" are misleading except when applied to a weak exam-

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ple of a particular category of story. When resorting to the concept of genre fiction, I like to remember that the "Contemporary Serious Novel" can be a genre, too. Stories about dying fathers, rotten marriages, or ethnic identity can be just as prefabricated and unimaginative as novels about detectives or spies.

In his British secret service novels, le Carré has forgone pumped-up excitement in favor of more deeply believable fiction. He has often chosen to see the story through the limited views of his characters, the old trick that Henry James perfected. Suspense created through a limited point of view can be better than that attempted through godlike manipulation of the story, because it seems more natural: it puts readers into the mental worlds of the characters and makes them interpret things themselves if they want to follow the story.

This technique creates a sense of the muddle and detail of real life, which may be one of the keys to le Carré's previous fiction. While Smiley and his agents tend to be good at their profession, they also tend to be very palpably human, fighting against the enemies that we all face as well as against the diabolical genius who is the principal adversary. Smiley is always a good and loyal Englishman, and often it seems that he is the only one left. His operations are authentic because their suspense depends not on stunning plot machinery but on character.

The central metaphor of *The Little Drummer Girl* is theater, with Charlie being trained as a real-life actor to snare the bomber Khalil. Her story is indeed a good deal more melodramatic than the earlier books. There is an "unnerving smoothness" (le Carré's phrase) to it all. Her path, while full of twists and turns, is narrow, and everything happens just a little too marvelously and elaborately. The point of view shifts among the characters, in service to the snappy, uninterrupted progression of events; the characters act with a more studious conformity to the necessities of plot than have le Carré's best.

Neither Charlie nor her trainers and victims have enough independence. The novelist is always there, making them do the right thing. The upshot is that le Carré's "outdoor" spy tale loses a feeling of authenticity. The characters *are* all actors, and while this may in some way conform to le Carré's central metaphor, it doesn't help me believe the play.

Whether le Carré can be deeply at ease with a female protagonist I don't know, but he is not really at ease with Charlie. Either he puts her into more tight places than any heroine should endure, or she is overly prone to vomiting, psychological dissociation, and sexual frenzy. She is wasted or transported by a few too many experiences for one novel's duration, and this, along with the overdirection of the plot, makes the book seem more of a confection than *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* and *Smiley's People*.

Besides being a step too orchestrated, the characters may also suffer from what might be called formulaic even-handedness toward the two sides, Palestinian and Israeli. Le Carré's genius here is to have found a way to represent both sides with what finally amounts to equal time, to avoid tipping the scale one way or the other in the total amount of suffering and guilt; but this may contribute to the pallor of the characters representing those sides. Some of the cameo-appearance characters, either not associated with the political causes or on their crazy fringes, are more memorable than the protagonists. The best characters in the novel are English: a timid but canny theatrical agent named Quilley and the foul-mouthed, abusive Inspector Picton. The book might have profited had le Carré allowed this full, Dickensian élan in more of the principal characters, instead of tending so carefully to the morality of their involvements. This is an old complaint in fiction and drama—if only the other characters in *Henry IV* were as alive as Falstaff!—and not too much should be made of it, since when you give Falstaff his own play it can well be a flop.

Perhaps we should not raise le Carré's new novel up to the level of Great Literature in order to knock it down. My point is only that by comparison with a number of his own earlier novels, *The Little Drummer Girl* is better as a contemporary thriller and not quite as good as a novel. As one who imagines himself a connoisseur of this very fine novelist, I see le Carré's latest as a book that may please many, but which may not be among his very best. ■

Speer Morgan is the author of **Belle Starr** and **Brother Enemy**.

The Naked and the Reincarnated

Ancient Evenings
by Norman Mailer, Little, Brown, 709 pp., $19.95
Reviewed by Bruce Allen

WE'VE BEEN HEARING about it for years: the "big Egyptian novel" that promised to solidify Mailer's sometimes rickety literary reputation, to prove him a qualified member of the pantheon of novelists that includes Melville and Hemingway and Faulkner and the rest of the Big Boys.

Well, here is *Ancient Evenings* at last, an apparent blockbuster likely to earn back the enormous sums of money advanced to its author during the ten years he spent writing it (a decade, be it remembered, that saw several other Mailer publications and climaxed with the splendid *The Executioner's Song* in 1979). It's the first book of a promised trilogy, and I wouldn't bet a nickel against Mailer's completing the whole astonishing project.

He has set this book in a place and time appropriate to his demonstratedly obsessive interest in urgent issues and ambitious themes. Egypt in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B.C., during the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties, known as the Later New Kingdom, was a prosperous, powerful civilization threatened by both foreign enemies and internecine unrest: the parallels with present America aren't forced, but few readers will miss them.

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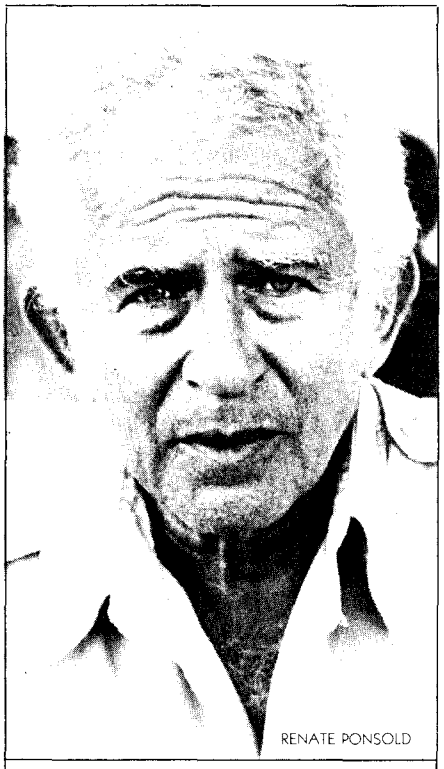
This is a world where human and divine entities are believed to intermingle constantly, and time to be mysteriously fluid: "How can we be certain that what we say we will do tomorrow has not in truth taken place yesterday, although we cannot quite remember since it was in a dream." Telepathic powers are often given to mortals: "we know what it is to live in the thoughts of another." Reincarnation is part of human possibility; the story's central character, for example, has lived four different lives. Incest is not uncommon, and homosexual dominance and submission are expressions of men's natural competitiveness and of their need to "receive" one another's knowledge and strength. It is a world, in short, characterized by those extremes of violence and willfulness, and by those perceptions, that we have seen throughout Mailer's work.

The story confronts us from its outset. Descriptions of extreme physical pain and of agonizing disorientation precede its narrator's gradual realization of what he has become: the "Ka" of Menenhetet II, killed in his twenty-first year. The Ka "awakens," after his earthly death, inside a vast Necropolis, a city of graves and burial vaults from which, it is believed, members of the nobility pass to their second lives in Khert-Neter, the Land of the Dead.

Menenhetet II meets a ghost, soon revealed as the Ka of his great-grandfather and namesake, Menenhetet I, renowned in their family's history as "a man of unspeakable strength and sinister habits." This elder, who now becomes his great-grandson's guide and instructor, is an enigmatic mixture of natural and supernatural powers. Having met his final death following his third successive reincarnation, aged 180 years in all, Menenhetet is a most peculiar fount of wisdom, pouring forth extravagant tales of the doings of the gods to smooth his young "Second's" passage through the afterlife.

Through a night-long conversation dominated by Menenhetet I's long—some will say interminable—account of his four lives, we learn that he accomplished his reincarnations through knowledge of a secret method taught him by an old man: orgasm with a woman at the instant of physical death—"the child you make in the last moments of life can become a new body for yourself."

Menenhetet recounts his experiences in the battle of Kadesh against the Hittites, a vivid set-piece showing Mailer at his most vigorous. He details the pleasures of cannibalism—"The meat of a man gives a strong heart for fighting. It is good to eat meat that has talked to us"—and describes his years of exile



Norman Mailer.

in the desert, then his tenure, once restored to favor, as Governor of his Pharaoh's harem. Later Menenhetet was appointed "Companion" to Queen Nefertiri, became her lover, and was drawn into a palace intrigue that resulted in an abrupt, violent end to his first life. A teasingly brief summary of his subsequent incarnations reveals that he would later rise to eminence as High Priest at Karnak, and descend to ignominy as a brothel-keeper and grave robber; perhaps this adumbrates some concerns of the volumes to follow. Finally, this long flashback concluded, Mailer brings the book to a frightening climax, as the two Kas enter the Land of the Dead; in a passage that invites comparison with Dante, the book comes to a stunning, visionary conclusion.

Though this colorful and violent world comes convincingly alive before us, there is never any doubt that what we are reading is a Norman Mailer novel. The old, familiar themes are as persistent, and truculent, as ever. Risk-taking and physical courage are posited as necessary human responses to the universe's indifferent mastery over man. Some windy passages praising the virtues inherent in the fundamentals of life are only infrequently redeemed by wry humor, as when Menenhetet says, "I came to the sad conclusion that excrement was as much a part of magic as blood or fire."

There are flashes of the old pugnacity, too. Surely we detect the Mailer who loves to hate reporters in the following: "Having no children of their own to protect, eunuchs were always ready to talk about all forbidden things, but then, the same . . . was true for scribes." (I guess I know what he thinks about reviewers, and I don't want to talk about it.)

The fascinated emphasis on reincarnation recalls Mailer's dreamy ruminations about Marilyn Monroe's possible next life and his attraction to Gary Gilmore, whose request for death was based on his hope for "a second chance," and seems entirely appropriate to a writer who has been publicly concerned about his eventual ranking among his contemporaries.

I suspect posterity will look favorably on *Ancient Evenings*, and overlook most of its *longeurs* and embarrassments. The novel's enormous length and intermittent prolixity are balanced by its dramatic momentum and superb readability. Several of the book's long conversations do seem to go on for hours. Even sympathetic and attentive readers will occasionally be bored, and possibly astonished by the way Mailer's generally crisp prose slackens and grows coarse in many of the sex scenes. Together Menenhetet and Nefertiri sound, at certain times, like Viva and one of her chums heavy-breathing through an Andy Warhol movie, and at others like a *Mad* magazine parody of Mellors and Lady Chatterley: "My obelisk was floating on her river."

Still, the novel abounds with vivid and memorable passages: Menenhetet II's ghastly, curiously beautiful account of his dead body being embalmed, a glorious description of the passing of the Pharaoh's barge, and the extended portrayal of the Great Festival of Ramses II. Displays of virtuosity such as these remind us that Mailer remains a gifted and diligent communicator, a real novelist. Never mind all the postures he's adopted and hats he's tried on in the last twenty years or so.

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His characters are believable and troublingly complex; Ramses IX in particular is a dazzling mixture of political guile and personal charm, *hauteur* and self-doubt. The magical, superhuman dimensions they sometimes inhabit are evoked by the simplest and most economical means imaginable. With his realism, Mailer is capable of making the "unreal" entirely credible.

This is probably the most ambitious fiction undertaken by any American writer since *Gravity's Rainbow* a decade ago. I'm sure that Thomas Pynchon, wherever he is, will like this gutsy, risky book; I think Melville might have admired it. *Ancient Evenings* has been worth the wait. ■

Bruce Allen is an SR contributing editor.

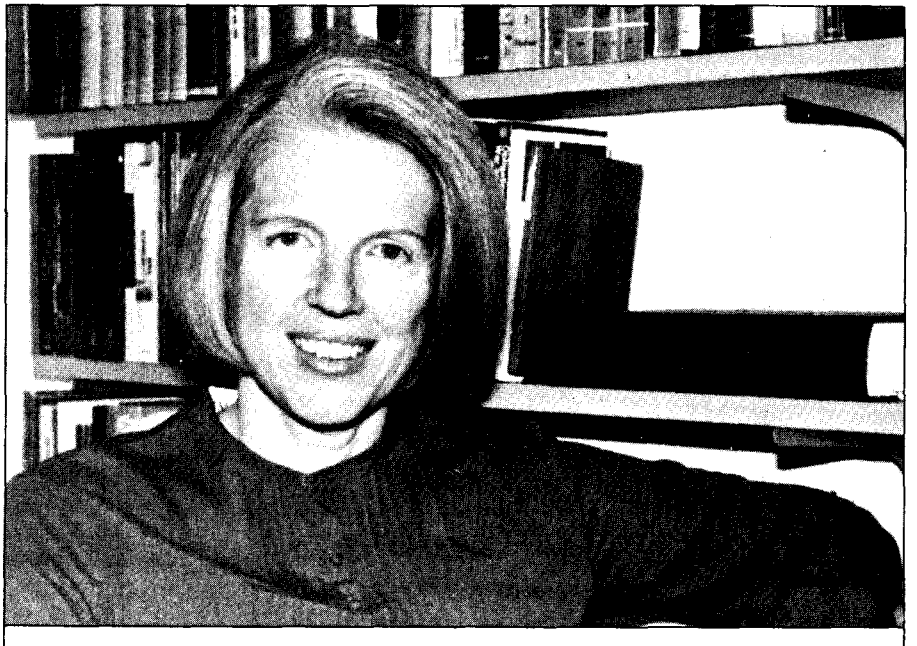
Who's Got a Secret?

Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation
by Sissela Bok, Pantheon Books, 332 pp., $16.95
Reviewed by Robert R. Harris

SISSELA BOK confronts practices that most of us engage in thoughtlessly: lying and keeping secrets. In her latest book, as in *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (1978), she approaches these two slippery subjects with common sense and judicious logic. Both books are important not because Bok is always right—although she mostly is—but because she is forthright and skilled at reasoning. Bok dissects her subjects and discovers their subtleties and contradictions. The result is an important investigation of moral and ethical responsibility.

Bok begins *Secrets* by presenting a critical distinction. "Whereas," she writes, "I take lying to be *prima facie* wrong, with a negative presumption against it from the outset, secrecy need not be." She elaborates, "While all deception requires secrecy, all secrecy is not meant to deceive." Few would argue, for example, that the secrecy of the voting booth is intended to deceive (the politics of Cook County, Illinois, notwithstanding).

Secrecy, Bok notes, comes in distinct and different shadings: the sacred, the intimate, the private, the unspoken, the silent, the prohibited, the shameful, the stealthy, the deceitful. All are not present at once, and secrecy should not be generally defined as good or evil. Bok presents a broad spectrum of issues that require a coming to terms with secrecy. In addition to discussing secrecy's role in what each of us considers sacred and intimate, Bok ferrets out the role of secrets in secret societies, self-deception, confessions, gossip, governmental and institutional power and accountability, trade and corporate policy, science research, state and military operations, whistle-blowing and leaks, intrusive social science research, investigative journalism, and undercover police work.



VICTORIA BOK

Sissela Bok: secrecy comes in distinct and different shadings.

Bok's findings have timely implications in both the private and public realms. Some of her judgments are highly controversial. Of the FBI's ABSCAM investigations she writes, "There is insufficient evidence, in fact, that such an operation succeeds in anything except in *documenting those crimes that it generates*" (her emphasis). She deems it unwise for a government to engage in such schemes "without evidence that they reduce corruption among public officials," and argues that it is unfair to lead someone "to take part in crimes he would probably never have committed otherwise" whether through "excessive temptation, exploiting weakness, affecting judgment, or threats."

The press, Bok says, is the most important counterbalance against rationales, and rationalizations, for secrecy. Yet she judges the press's reliance on the argument of "the public's right to know" as a "patently inadequate" defense for excessive probing and exposing. The Supreme Court has never recognized such a right to know, and as Ronald Dworkin has argued, "No one could sue the *New York Times* for *not* publishing the Pentagon Papers." Bok concludes that the public's right to know is, at best, a right to access to information—and not all information. News reporting, she says, is a vital public resource *and* big business; because of their immense power the media, like government, must be committed to openness and accountability.

Conflicts over what should and should not be kept secret are really conflicts about power—about who should control information. Secrecy can be used to withhold information or to make sure that only certain information is transmitted. These

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rather obvious points are important because secrecy can be horribly abused. Bok quotes Voltaire: "Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities." The ability to use secrecy with discretion—to "discern what is and is not intrusive and injurious"—is, Bok argues, part of the process of moral development.

Bok poses an interesting thought experiment in which she imagines the existence of four societies. In the first, you and I cannot keep secrets, but others can. In the second, this is reversed, and you and I can discover all secrets. In the third, no one can keep secrets; and in the fourth, everyone can. She then demonstrates how each of these societies is less desirable than our own imperfect and unpredictable one. *Some* secrecy is indispensable. Everyone needs privacy. Yet there must be limits. Bok compares secrecy to fire: "both enhance and protect life, yet both can stifle, lay waste, spread out of control." Both may nurture or consume; each can be turned against itself.

It sometimes seems that we have neglected the need for balance. Organized prying has proliferated in recent years: credit investigations; the formation of data banks; snooping by employers into a worker's background; corporate espionage; undercover investigations by journalists, government, and law enforcement; rapid technological advances in eavesdropping techniques; and the tendency of psychologists to encourage public confession of the most personal aspects of our lives. All of these mark a trend toward the end of secrecy, often under the guise of "openness."

On the other hand, Bok sees an equal threat in the efforts by institutions, government, and corporations to keep more and more secrets. Paramount in her concern are the recent inroads that the government has made against the Freedom of Information Act. She argues that public access to government information is crucial to the survival of democracy. When governments cut off access to their decisions, they undercut accountability and diminish free choice. "The moral arguments for any secret practices," she writes, "must be capable of being publicly discussed."

Bok's argument revolves around the belief that in personal matters the individual should control degrees of secrecy and openness, and the burden to prove otherwise falls on those who would deny individuals such control. In public matters those in power must prove their need for secrecy and offer safeguards against abuse of this control. "It is fallacious to argue," she writes, "*from* individual privacy to corporate privacy, or *from* an individual's right to keep personal documents secret to a government's right to classify information as it sees fit" (our emphasis). Individuals lack the power of institutions and governments. When it comes to either keeping, or exposing, secrets, there is a need for balance.

It is easy to charge that Bok's conclusions are simplistic, even superficial. After all, reasonable people would have to agree with her that usually it is wrong to lie, or that secrecy can be used for both good and evil, or that it is more justifiable for an individual to keep a personal document secret than it is for a government to suppress access to its decision-making process. But to level such charges at Bok is to miss the point and to downgrade her common sense and logic. Bok can be prim and at times overly serious, but one would not necessarily read *Lying* and *Secrets* to discover new ethical principles. Rather, the value of her work lies in the straightforward, intelligent, and moral method in which she explores her subjects and determines what it means to be responsible for the consequences of our actions. ■

Robert R. Harris is an SR contributing editor.

BOOK BRIEFS

The Moons of Jupiter: Stories
by Alice Munro
Alfred A. Knopf, 233 pp., $12.95

HOW HARD IT IS to tell the truth, how difficult to describe those things that we dismiss as ordinary, self-evident, unmomentous. But these may turn out to be the measures of our lives. In these tales set in rural and urban Canada, Alice Munro is a wizard at prizing out what gives people a sense of consequence, whether it's a lover, a manner, or even a corset.

She conjures in two modes, from the outside and from the inside. Of the calm, objective stories—the ones *The New Yorker* tends to pick—"Dulse," "Prue," and "Labor Day Dinner" show women at the ends of affairs, facing life with varying degrees of equanimity. The title piece concerns the end of another kind of love affair, as a daughter faces the death of her father and family. "The Turkey Season," one of my favorites, is an extraordinary evocation of adolescent feeling, summoning its "perfect, impenetrable mystery" and delivering it intact.

Those stories approached through the inner mode are distraught, less perfect, but packing the wallop of true surprise: the affair may be over, but not in the woman's head. In fact, what distinguishes the distraught stories is that unreturned love has stripped the protagonist of dignity: "Love is not serious though it may be fatal."

As in much of our great literature, these stories expose the conundrums of love and mortality. At the least they are engaging, and at their luminous best, reveal precision as the highest wisdom. —ANNA SHAPIRO

In Constant Flight.
by Elizabeth Tallent
Alfred A. Knopf, 159 pp., $11.95

ELIZABETH TALLENT is an elegant miniaturist. Her quiet, elegiac stories are shaped less by plot than by immaculately precise imagery. She is concerned with nuances of character and feeling, the fugitive, telling moments.

Tallent's people are artists and promising young academics in esoteric fields—astronomers, cellists, ornithologists, poets, choreographers, anthropologists—the kind of people who keep finches named after Henry James' characters, drink Perrier, collect Indonesian baskets, and eat macrobiotic food. The stories are about lovers who have parted, about refugees from mismatched marriages, and about people caught in the transition between husband and lover; all are paralyzed by failed expectations

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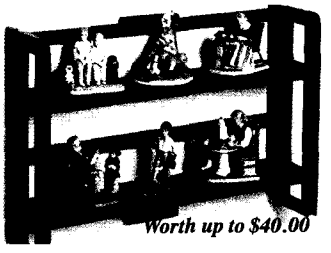

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and the complications created by need. Often the reason one individual has left another, or been abandoned, is not completely understood; often these partings cannot be articulated. Like the Abyssinian cat in one story who keeps spontaneously aborting, the relationships in Tallent's fictional world often seem to fracture without warning.

What makes these eleven short stories unusual is Tallent's keen and original eye for detail; her character's obsessions read as though grounded firmly in fact. The lab procedures of a naturalist documenting the migration of a rare breed of swans are described as scrupulously as the hallucinations of a charming, senile ornithologist who sees birds in his house and "ferns unfurling like seahorses from cracks in the floorboards." Even in the fragile moments when words fail her characters—the moments around which all of these stories pivot—her meanings surface with the liquid ease of daydreams. —ANDREA BARNET

F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Biography
by André Le Vot
translated by William Byron
Doubleday, 397 pp., $19.95

HERE IS A MAJOR NEW biography by an internationally recognized scholar, based on a close study of the immense Fitzgerald collection at Princeton University, as well as of recent biographies and other writings by and about the doomed novelist's Jazz Age contemporaries.

Le Vot gives detailed attention to Fitzgerald's storied triumphs—he was once the world's highest-paid writer—and tragedies, such as his wife Zelda's madness and his own alcoholism and buffoonery. Le Vot does justice to his subject's painfully honest, if inconsistent, self-knowledge; in fact, his appreciation of the later "confessional" writings, collected in *The Crack-Up,* is so generous that it's surprising to find certain harsh and snide summary judgments: "We know what his promises were worth"; "We can skip over the usual hijinks, the drunkenness and chaos." His otherwise meticulous approach yields a lengthy analysis of Fitzgerald's research for *The Great Gatsby,* which included a diligent perusal of "the criminal annals of the twenties," and a helpful description of that gemlike novel's sophisticated construction. Also included are a trenchant account of the Fitzgeralds' European adventuring and, best of all, an illuminating discussion of Fitzgerald's fruitful, frustrating relationship with the ambitious Ernest Hemingway, whose star rose while Scott's fell. This intelligent study corroborates and updates the standard biographies by Arthur Mizener and Andrew Turnbull, and is in most important respects their equal.

—BRUCE ALLEN

The Science in Science Fiction
edited by Peter Nichols
Alfred A. Knopf, 208 pp., $25

LONG DISMISSED as juvenile adventure stories, science fiction has been steadily gaining respect for its serious side, its ability to view society and the universe from new perspectives. It is also gaining a wider audience, judging from the recent wave of popular movies and best-selling books.

The science in science fiction is used in several ways. Scientific reality is sometimes scrupulously adhered to, sometimes stretched, and sometimes flagrantly ignored. This can be confusing to people without broad scientific knowledge, so three scientists and science fiction writers have produced a guide to the scientific background of such main themes of science fiction as extraterrestrials, starships, time travel, and robots. Encyclopedic in format, amply illustrated, the book assesses the plausibility of these ideas. Though the authors give a bit too much credit to some of the wilder speculations of modern physicists, such as alternate universes, generally the book is well-informed and balanced.

—DON LAGO

A Stroll with William James
by Jacques Barzun
Harper & Row, 288 pp., $16.50

IN THIS ABSORBING study of the American who revolutionized psychology, philosophy, and aesthetics, Jacques Barzun does for the twentieth century what he did for the nineteenth in *Berlioz and the Romantic Century* and *Darwin, Marx, Wagner.* The time span covered is 1890 to 1914, but as Barzun meticulously shows, numerous contemporary figures in the arts and sciences are recycled or distorted versions not only of William James and his brother Henry, but of such revolutionary figures as Wilde, Conrad, Wells, Monet, Ives, and the Joycean advocates of the "new science."

William James' main insight, perhaps the key concept of our century, was that reality is relative and multiple. Rejecting the simplistic determinism of both scientific Materialists and religious Absolutists, he showed the human mind to be a fluid "shimmering of consciousness." Far from the "manifestly fallacious" contemporary notion of the mind as computer, the human psyche is, in Barzun's analogy, like an Impressionist painting: "no hard contours, but fringes around every object or cluster, all of them aglow with the feeling of interest, with meaning."

An interdisciplinary thinker who has pondered his subject for half a century, Barzun is the ideal exponent of James. He writes with equal authority about science, psychology, and literature; his prose spreads in graceful ripples from one to the next. The Barzun style has the distinctive Jamesian "*thickness* . . . the intense awareness of multiplicity—in nature, in persons, in art, religion, and social reality." Readers who accompany James and Barzun on this "stroll" will experience not only intellectual enhancement but the physical chill, the "inward quiver" that James, fusing mind and matter, characterized as the goal of art.

—JACK SULLIVAN

The Witness of Poetry
by Czeslaw Milosz
Harvard University Press
121 pp., $8.95

DEFENSES OF POETRY have been around almost as long as poetry itself. Both rarely have much effect on the real world—the world outside of poems, in which wars are fought, people die, and ideals are tarnished. Perhaps, suggests Milosz, the blame

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lies partly with the poets themselves. Perhaps they and those who defend their craft have grown afraid of reality, afraid to see it clearly and speak about it in words we can all comprehend.

Milosz is not afraid. A Lithuanian-born Polish poet and winner of the 1980 Nobel Prize in literature, he speaks in *The Witness of Poetry* with the sort of quiet, preeminent brilliance that makes his defense, like Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth,* a classic for our time. The six essays that make up this slim volume were originally delivered as the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard, but the dusty platitudes we sometimes associate with academic oratory are nowhere in evidence. Instead, Milosz works outward from the facts of his life—his provincial origins, his classical and Catholic education, his experience in Poland during the catastrophic years of World War II—to explain why true poetry is and always has been "the passionate pursuit of the Real."

Milosz's chief target in these pages is the French symbolist poets, those lonely *fin de siècle* souls who retreated from society into art for art's sake, and took most of modern literature along with them. Such cultivated alienation, insists Milosz, was a luxury possible only in societies with relatively stable social structures. Today's unsettled world demands poets who, like Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare, will speak for rather than against the enduring values of their communities. Profound and accessible, passionate without a trace of sentimentality, *The Witness of Poetry* glows like the sun in a late autumn sky. —ADAM GUSSOW

FASSBINDER

continued from page 22

justifies that it is murder.

Beauty in the European concept has to do with more than a skin without wrinkles. It is something else—a glow, a personality. If you accept that, then in *Querelle* Jeanne Moreau is very beautiful. She's never been more beautiful than in this film, because of what Fassbinder did. He put her in the center point of every shot she is in. He sees her in mirrors. He makes the camera-moves from her profile. She has the most beautiful lighting. That's what he did with Hanna Schygulla in *Maria Braun.* He just gave it to her as a present. He could make women very beautiful.

SR *Where do you think Fassbinder got his inspiration?*

SCHIDOR Mainly from things that were going on around him, in his private life. Fassbinder thought that to be really happy, you had to find yourself again, re-invent yourself, and that you could only do this if you had a brother. He always wanted to have a brother. This brother thing is in *Querelle,* the film, but not in the book.

He always had people around him, and he was more interested in their relationships than in making movies. You know, if he saw two people getting close, he would do everything feasible to break it up. Or he would give an actor a part for which he would earn quite a bit of money —then make the actor go on a vacation and invite him along so the actor would spend everything he'd made. He had discovered that the main thing of power is that the people around you must be financially dependent. That thought was so clear in his mind that one of his main rules was to prevent the people around him from earning money.

SR *How did Fassbinder work with the actors in* Querelle?

SCHIDOR *Querelle* was the first film in which he had three actors he had never worked with—Jeanne Moreau, Brad Davis, and Franco Nero—and he was shattered with fear. He didn't talk to them, but then Fassbinder never spoke to actors—not ever. Brad Davis was really scared. For an American actor who thinks he is a star to play in a film in which he has to get raped is quite a major thing. For him, the name Fassbinder meant everything. But then he was there a week before the shooting, and Fassbinder didn't say a word to him. He was there at dinner every night, and not a word. If Davis said anything to Fassbinder, Fassbinder would say in German, "Tell him to eat his food and not talk." I saw him at those moments and I thought he was going to flip out. Finally, the last night before shooting, Fassbinder saw it was getting too close, and he suddenly said to Brad, "Listen. I'm not going to ask anything more of you than you can do as an actor." And then Brad understood and he was not frightened anymore. But Fassbinder was still frightened.

He had an incredible admiration for stars. But he liked to have people afraid of him. It's one of the essences of power—you have to have people frightened, or you can't control them. Fassbinder succeeded in this.

SR *Before Fassbinder's death, did you have any feeling that he might die?*

SCHIDOR No, I didn't. But I did the last interview with him, and it is on film in my documentary about the making of *Querelle.* And now when you see it it seems exactly as if he was dying. He seems like 150 years old in a way. Sort of very far away, like he's someplace else. For the first time, in those interviews, he was totally honest.

SR *What was Fassbinder's personal life like?*

SCHIDOR His mother was a very strange lady. When he was young, she gave him money to go to the cinema just to get rid of him. He saw five films a day from the time he was 6 years old—he skipped school and went off to the cinema. Then he left his parents, and his mother only called him after he was famous, when she saw his name in a newspaper. Fassbinder put her into his films as an actress, and she always had to play really wicked mothers.

SR *What has been the impact of Fassbinder's death on his films?*

SCHIDOR It's amazing what happened with his death. He has suddenly become this pillar of German culture. A week after his death there was a talk show on German television comparing film legends, and the two they chose were Fassbinder and Marilyn Monroe.

SR *What would he have thought of that?*

SCHIDOR He would have loved it. All he ever wanted was to be on the cover of *Time* magazine. That was his biggest dream.

SR *What do you think was Fassbinder's greatest genius?*

SCHIDOR He showed what is done to people by other people—how they exploit each other's emotions. Everyone wants to know, "How far can I push the one I love?" ■

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SR Competition No. 35

Enough easy contests! The First Annual E.B. White Paragraph Write-Off will test your mettle for a change. Get down your copies of *The Points of My Compass, The Second Tree from the Corner, One Man's Meat,* etc., and saturate your mind with the finest expository prose of any contemporary American author. If this is your introduction to E.B. White, then verily you have your reward. If you'd like a more negotiable reward, emulate the Master as convincingly as you can in about 150 words, taking care to marry his favorite themes —sanity in world affairs, farming on the coast of Maine, and the amiable predictability of dachshunds—to his immaculate, comfortable style.

Entries for Competition No. 35 must be received by May 31 and the winners will be announced in the July-August issue. Send sumissions to *SR* Competition No. 35, *Saturday Review,* Box 704, Kingston, New Jersey 08528. Entries become the property of *SR*.

Winners of No. 34

We called for specimens of language that sounded as if they made sense but really didn't. The response was overwhelming. The postmistress in tiny Kingston, New Jersey, the only member of her profession who has ever greeted our appearance with little whoops of relief, has asked us to express her sincere thanks to all those who failed to submit. With the managerial genius native to her organization, she has even proposed that future contests be limited to *every other subscriber.* We are thinking about this, though we find it tiring to do so.

Box 704 yielded a good deal of recycled Sam Goldwyn, Casey Stengel, Yogi Berra, and other elocutionists of that ilk: verbal contracts not worth the paper they're printed on, etc. That was to be suspected. But imagine our surmise at learning that ten or twelve readers had heard with their own ears the remark "I feel more like I do now than I did a while ago."

Choosing winners was tough. We finally plumped for reality over invention and gave the laurels to contestants who could cite plausible circumstances in which they had bagged their trophy.

FIRST PRIZE to Mrs. Curtis B. Creswell of Annapolis, Maryland, who for fifty years has treasured in her heart an utterance spoken "with great emotion" on a solemn occasion by the president of her college:

Poems are made by fools like me
But God can only make a tree.

Hapless man! How long in Limbo, we wonder, for a misplaced modifier?

SECOND PRIZE to Rose P. Sarro of Port Jefferson Station, New York, who overheard this in a conversation between a teenaged daughter and a friend: "Do you know how embarrassing it is to get caught red-handed at something you're not doing?!"

THIRD PRIZE to Patrick W. Henry of Fair Oaks, California, who heard this from a sports announcer during a timeout while a wounded player was carried from the field: "Fortunately, Smith's injury doesn't appear to be any worse than it is."

Among the HONORABLY MENTIONED we loved those that conjured up a sort of slapstick pictorial image:

"It's like looking for a camel in a haystack." (Beatrice Pino)

"I decided it was time to bite the bull by the horns!" (Eleanor Ostrow)

"Take off like a horse afire." (Peter B. Moreland)

And some too surreal to be imaged:

"My mother and father were cousins. That's why I look so much alike." (Ruth M. Parkinson)

"In-depth local news is so expensive that other radio stations drop it like flies." (Jay Paap)

"I don't know how old you are, but you sure don't look your age!" (Mary M. Powers)

And we confess to liking, in spite of the better angles of our nature, some that were faintly disgusting in a fleshly sort of way. Annie Bergman, for instance, recalls this desolation of Clement C. Moore's *Visit from Saint Nicholas:*

Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the hash.

David McConnaughey had a colleague years ago who said that "a lot of water has been passed under the bridge since then." And though we vaguely suspect we have seen it before, we thank James M. Thomas for reminding us of that fundamental maxim:

"Do under others as you would have others do under you."

Puzzles

Literary Crypt No. 180

MISTS FOG GY JZLI

IOQPFTAMAQV YQ MIS FOXX

MIOM SUSQ MIS FOXX RSXX

PYFQ. —L. JYTXSH

Wit Twister No. 192
Edited by Arthur Swan

The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash with a blank corresponds to a letter of the word.

Deformed by _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ,
poorly fed, and thin,
He somehow grew up wise and
sound and free.
Now poster, pin, and
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ flash his grin,
And busy _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ spell
out Victory! —A.S.

March-April Answers

Literary Crypt No. 179
The trouble with most contemporary novels is that they are full of people not worth knowing.
—Norman Cousins

Wit Twister No. 191
Tropes, poster, topers, presto

Tunick Double-Crostic No. 1
Ovidius Naso: *Metamorphoses*
It collects cinnamon, and spikenard, and myrrh, and of these materials builds a pile on which it . . . breathes out its last breath amidst odours. From the body of the parent bird, a young Phoenix issues forth, destined to live as long a life as its predecessor.
(Quoted in Bulfinch's *Mythology.*)

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	1 N	2 G	3 L	4 R	5 K		6 Q	7 N	8 V		9 W	10 F	11 C	12 J		13 H	14 S	15 O	16 T	
17 K	18 M		19 L	20 Q	21 I		22 W	23 H	24 C	25 N		26 P	27 K	28 T		29 E	30 H	31 I	32 L	
	33 R	34 U	35 D		36 P	37 K	38 T	39 Q	40 R	41 N	42 F	43 G	44 J	45 O	46 K	47 C		48 B		
49 I	50 J	51 U	52 R		53 K	54 N	55 W	56 Q		57 M	58 U	59 E		60 I	61 A	62 N		63 F	64 M	
65 D	66 O	67 W	68 L	69 C	70 K	71 Q	72 G		73 P	74 R	75 M	76 I	77 J		78 P	79 L		80 F	81 M	
82 H	83 G	84 N		85 P	86 J		87 D	88 G	89 W	90 A	91 V		92 Q	93 J	94 E		95 R	96 H	97 B	
	98 O	99 V	100 S	101 P	102 W		103 L	104 B		105 F	106 A	107 K	108 D	109 G	110 W	111 J		112 C	113 E	
	114 V	115 F	116 C	117 N	118 K	119 B	120 Q	121 J		122 W	123 V	124 N	125 Q		126 G	127 H	128 M	129 R	130 V	
131 N		132 K	133 T	134 C	135 W	136 J	137 V	138 R		139 E	140 I	141 K	142 M		143 J	144 B	145 N	146 L		
147 V	148 O	149 K	150 C	151 Q	152 I	153 N	154 R	155 C		156 A	157 U	158 B		159 O	160 K	161 I	162 Q	163 C	164 K	
165 T	166 G	167 V	168 R	169 P		170 J	171 S		172 Q	173 R	174 W	175 B	176 A	177 J		178 O	179 E		180 K	
	181 E	182 G	183 B	184 Q		185 J	186 C	187 P	188 U	189 L	190 R		191 O	192 T	193 N	194 H	195 J	196 I	197 P	
	198 E	199 S	200 L		201 M	202 K	203 W	204 N	205 H	206 L	207 U		208 A	209 P	210 K	211 T	212 O	213 V	214 R	

TUNICK DOUBLE-CROSTIC NO. 2

Letters to clue answers, when put in the appropriately numbered squares, spell out a quotation. The first letters of the clue answers spell out the name of the quotation's author.

CLUES	WORDS
A. Solidify; set	106 156 61 176 90 208
B. Treated as a celebrity	175 48 144 104 119 183 97 158
C. Farm system association (2 wds.)	11 47 69 112 134 116 186 24 155 163 150
D. Eve's grandson (Gen. 4:26)	35 65 87 108
E. Ancient Scandinavian	94 59 113 139 181 29 198 179
F. Spider's snare	63 10 42 105 115 80
G. Wright flight site	109 43 88 166 72 2 182 126 83
H. Spirited state	23 30 13 194 82 96 205 127
I. 1939 Garbo vehicle	76 161 196 21 152 31 140 49 60
J. Hanky-panky (2 wds.)	143 170 50 77 93 111 44 136 185 195 121 12 86 177
K. Song for *The Mikado's* Ko-Ko (5 wds.)	107 149 5 118 27 210 180 164 37 70 160 46 202
L. Occasionally (3 wds.)	79 103 19 68 206 200 146 32 3 189
M. ". . . that he may play the fool nowhere but in's···"(*Hamlet*, III, i) (2 wds.)	64 57 128 201 81 75 142 18

CLUES	WORDS
N. *Ralph*···; earliest English comedy (2 wds.)	7 54 153 84 193 124 204 25 41 117 145 1 62 131
O. Crafty; wily	178 191 66 212 98 148 15 45 159
P. Tumbled, as prices	26 209 36 78 197 169 85 101 187 73
Q. European finch; *Emberiza citrinella*	125 184 39 71 120 172 20 6 92 162 56 151
R. "Or truth can live with···" (e e cummings) (3 wds.)	4 40 214 138 33 95 154 129 52 74 173 168 190
S. Ntozake Shange's *When the Rainbow Is*···	14 199 100 171
T. Several-hatted official (hyph.)	16 192 28 133 38 165 211
U. In heaven (2 wds.)	51 157 34 188 207 58
V. Misleading hint; false clue (2 wds.)	99 8 147 123 130 91 114 167 213 137
W. Ground settling due to melting ice	67 89 110 22 55 135 102 203 174 9 122

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AFTERTHOUGHTS

Bruce VanWyngarden

"Surprised and Delighted"

My wife and I recently became parents for the second time and are learning to cope with the scary fact that the odds have evened. It's one-on-one now and we've found that many situations are best handled by "divide and distract" tactics. One of us does the shopping, 2-year-old in tow, while the other remains in the car with the sleeping (we hope) newborn. As one who often sits and waits, I have lately become a kind of asphalt anthropologist, an unnoticed observer of human behavior on the parking lot.

One ritual fascinates me. I've discovered in our population those who seem unable to walk away from their automobiles without looking back at them. This is not a totally predictable phenomenon, but there are three conditions, any of which indicate a strong possibility of its occurrence. They are, in order of importance: a driver under 21 years old, a new car (and, I suspect, a used car newly purchased, although there is no way to know), and a very clean car. If all three of these qualifications are met, then somewhere between the car door's slam and the whish of the grocery store's airlock, watch for at least one and probably more "look-backs." The act can range from a quick over-the-shoulder peek to a 180-degree, hands-on-hips, full-body turn (a favorite of young men whose cars are noticeably higher at one end than the other).

All this, I guess, is to preface thanks to the hundreds of you who wrote to encourage us. We're moving onward, of course—in the world of magazine publishing we have to be thinking at least three months into the future most of the time—but in light of your letters, it's hard to resist a "look-back" at that first issue.

Our overworked staff soon invented a kind of shorthand nomenclature to cope with the flood of correspondence. The unconditionally supportive letters soon became known as "S and D's," as in "surprised and delighted to find *Saturday Review* in my mailbox today." Most of these seemed to have been written shortly after the magazine arrived, and gave us an immediate indication that this revival project was going to work. Those of you who wrote in this vein are responsible for an enormous collective sigh of relief in this office.

Within a few days we began receiving more letters of a type we called the "Yes, buts," which generally were laudatory but mentioned one or two complaints. Most of these tended to balance each other out. If fifteen writers wrote praising the interview format, fourteen wrote their disapproval. Many of you, however, pointed out our one undeniable faux pas—we didn't indent the second line of the clues in the Double-Crostic. Our apologies to those of you who struggled into the night trying to figure out who or what OVIDIUDSNASSOMHETAMORPPHOOSES was. The fault was not Mr. Tunick's, but ours. Even so, your comments were kind and fair. Try us again this month.

Another concern that many of you addressed was the fact that though your subscriptions were not set to elapse until, say, 1986, you wanted to help ensure *SR*'s future. May I humbly suggest that you consider a gift subscription, perhaps to some young relation who thinks Chekhov is a Russian hockey player.

Several of you reminded us that poets and poetry have a place in *SR*. Please be assured, we do not intend to ignore poetry. There is just so much of it, good and bad, that if we actively sought contributions I'm afraid our staff quickly would find itself overwhelmed. Still, I can't resist printing just one. It has been thumbtacked to the wall since we received it and was instrumental in helping us survive a particularly wintry March. It's from Margaret Kraenzel of Ardmore, Oklahoma, and she writes that the poem was written in Montana many years ago.

Spring
Is not a thing
Of buds that bloom
While grasses swing—
It is a full-drawn breath
To wring
The unaccustomed lungs
And make you die
Or
Spring!

Finally, there is the small matter of my misuse of the word *wean* in my first column. It's true that cartoon editor Brown does not and has never *weaned* his cartoons down to an acceptable number for us. My favorite letter among the many pointing out my error was from A. Augustin of Menlo Park, California, who wrote, "I had never thought of weaning as a process of getting rid of undesirables. Where was this idea when I was busy raising children?"

I offer no excuses, although the aforementioned second child's arrival was imminent when the piece was written, so my mind may have been predisposed to such thoughts. I trust that you'll forgive me and remember the adage "You can't wean 'em all."

I trust that you'll forgive the preceding silliness as well, and join us for July-August. Featured will be a profile of the late Barbara Pym, an interview with Andrés Segovia, and a look at Brooksfilm, the innovative production company of funnyman Mel Brooks. ■

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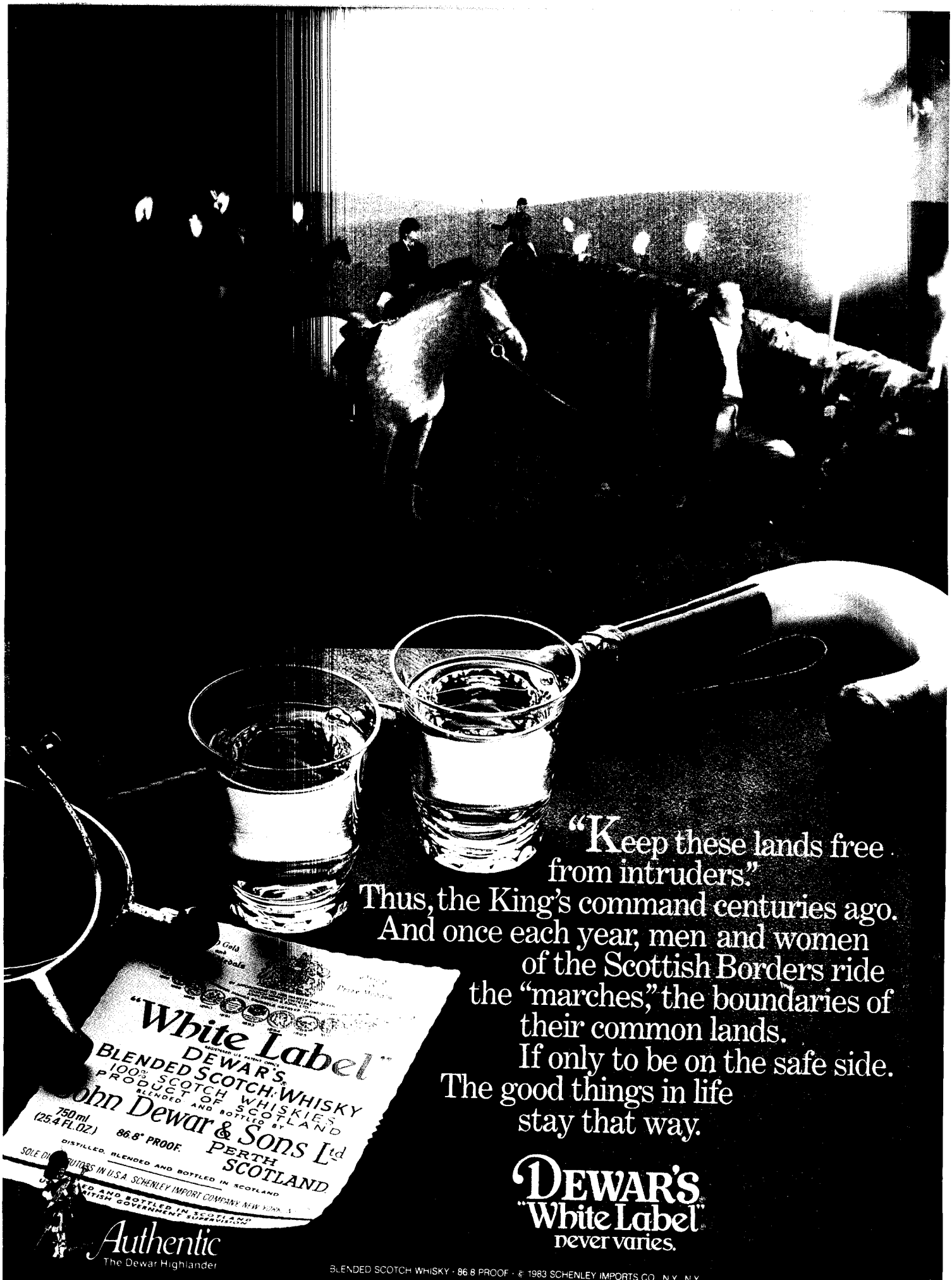

"Keep these lands free from intruders."
Thus, the King's command centuries ago.
And once each year, men and women of the Scottish Borders ride the "marches," the boundaries of their common lands.
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The good things in life stay that way.

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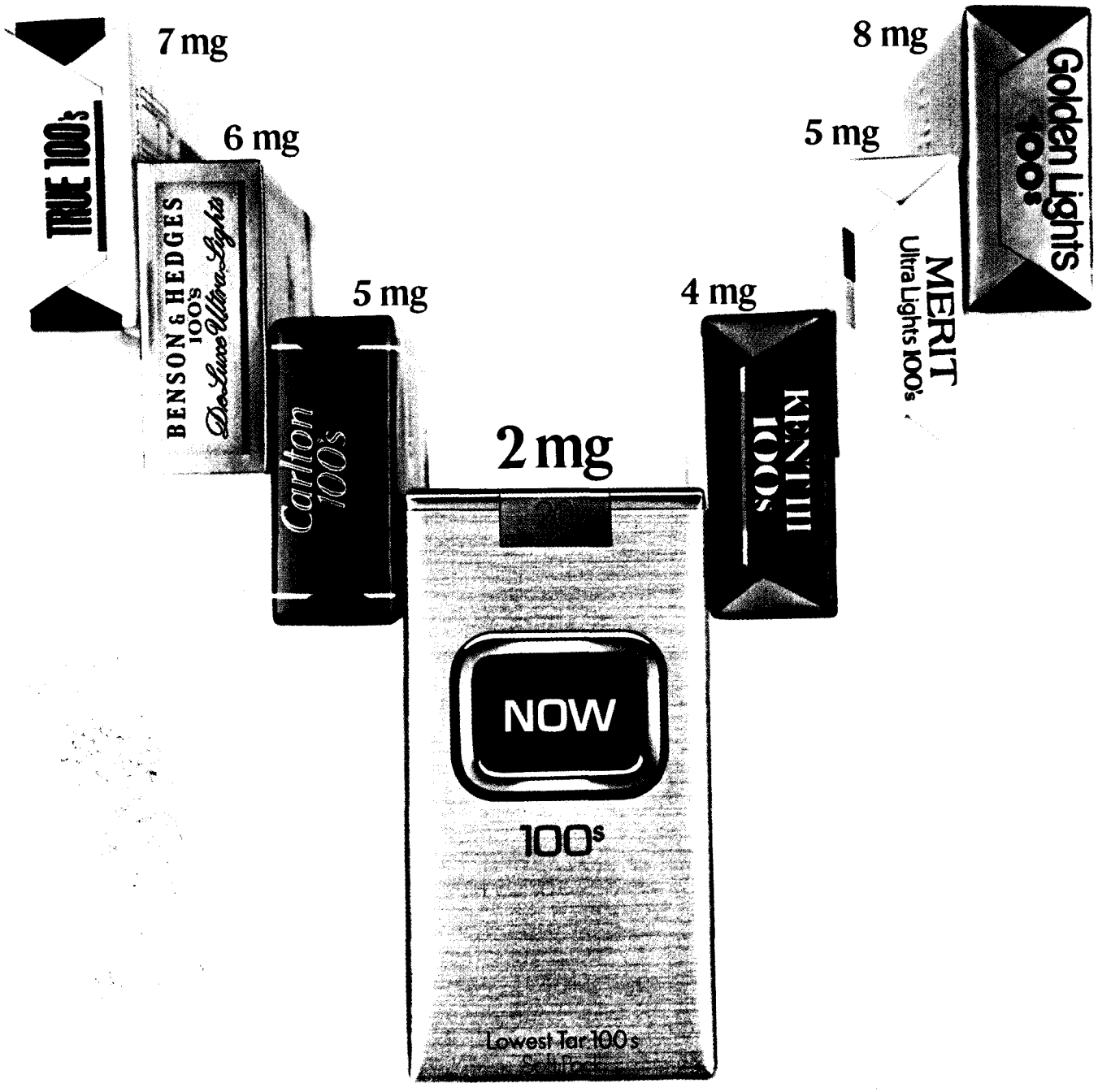

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